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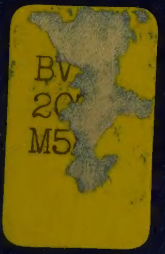

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Sermons

MUSINGS
ON
FAITH AND PRACTICE

BY
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Late Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts
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PREFACE

THESE articles were published in the S.P.G. *Mission Field* during the years 1916–18, and are similar to those which have been published in three volumes entitled 'Visions for Missionaries and others.' The Society has permitted me to publish these under a new name, and I have called them 'Musings': such they are. Moreover, I think they bear the impress of the War. It could not be otherwise. But since the Christian is a soldier by vocation, I hope the thoughts herein expressed may comfort and console. The years in front of us are no less serious than those through which we have just passed, both for Faith and Practice.

H. H. M.

BISHOPSBOURNE,
GROVE PARK,
CHISWICK,
May 1919

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I

VOICES

(I)

'All thy waves and storms have gone over me.'—Ps. xlii. 9.

VOICES: that is my subject—voices carried by winds: sounds borne along the air: what a subject for thought! We are told that man's hearing only catches a mere fragment of the sounds heard by vast numbers of earth's creatures. Some notes are too deep, thousands of them too high. But what we lose that way we gain in the spiritual sphere. No moment passes but ~~what~~ there are borne past us the voices of our brethren expressing every shade of joy and sorrow, of hope and despair, of faith and doubt. Are these all lost? Can we only imagine them? Nay, we have obtained a complete record of such. There is

no phase of spiritual feeling which has not been caught and fixed for ever, in the Psalms alone. That is their value. Besides them, books, records of man's inner life, have repeated all such cries and longings generation by generation. There they remain, ready for use by all. They are very, very old; and they are quite, quite new: thousands, too, in every generation believe that they are the first to have sounded depths so terrible that no one ever before could have known anything half so bad. Then in a little while peace comes; for it is peace to become aware that the winds have carried the same voices daily for millenniums up to God. So old a heritage makes us brothers: indeed it helps mightily to heal the broken heart when a sense of the vast fellowship comes home to us in our deepest, innermost thoughts. Then we bless God Who has caught every such sound and placed it in the Bible, and in the Old Testament as well as in the New. But those winds—there is much more than human feeling carried on their wings. Hush! It is the Spirit of God; yes, He is blowing over the land and brooding over man's home: at times a tempest, and again a south wind softly blowing. The voice of the Lord is in the wind, as well as the language of all the generations of men in thousands of languages. I think, too,

there are layers of human voices one above another, each of them carrying its special type of feeling. Some are more akin to the heavenlies, others pause midway, and some cling close to earth. The voice of the Lord passes through all these strata: not least in that one which has no strength to lift itself off the earth with the mists and the fogs, the wet and the cold. At this moment, and especially in this war time, my heart waxes tender as I try to penetrate into that lowest layer of sound. The earth —be tender as you think of it—it has its fogs, it is true: and far worse things are hers: morasses and precipices, deserts and perpetual frost, volcanos burst forth from her, earthquakes shatter her. Yet it is our home, exactly suited for our education. We could not do without the discipline of all that earth holds. It is no isle of 'the Lotus-eaters,' but a region where the Great King and all his knights must battle to the end, sorely beset, dying one by one, but ever on the right side in the cause of truth and justice. From such an earth, our training home, so lovely and also so terrible, voices are ever rising. Some soar right away into the upper air, mounting to heaven. I will not follow them now: I am all tenderness as I catch two voices close to the earth, one human, one Divine. And what strikes me

with wonder—nay, with awe—is the fact that I am really listening to the voices, first, of every generation of man for thousands of years past, and secondly, to the one eternal, never-changing voice of God, patiently dealing with His children, without haste, with all love. Nothing brings home that wonderful love so much as the fact that God reasons with man—has ever done so: in every generation, in every year, and on every day. The Father says to His elder son: 'Son, thou art ever with me.' What gentleness! God says to the nation: 'Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord.' What age-long and loving goodness!

Now listen: a voice full of anguish cries aloud—it is close to the earth, within the mist upon its surface. 'There cannot be a God, I won't believe it. I can never pray to Him again. He cannot care, even if He exists. My beautiful boy! he was so good: he had never given us a moment's trouble: he was the centre of our lives, and God let him suffer so terribly. Why? Why? It was unjust. I shall never get over it. I don't believe in God any longer.' And there is a sighing in the wind as if this were not a beautiful sound to carry away: yet it must be carried to the ear of the Father above. The wailing dies away, and we stand

silent. We ourselves have no reproaches: no: a human heart is breaking: God knows and cares, so we gladly whisper. Then there falls upon the ear a strain of music. Can it indeed be the voice of God? No sternness; no, it reasons. It is as though He waited, as He has waited in every age since man was created, knowing how human love well-nigh breaks human hearts till they can look up at length and trust. You will not expect me to tell you what this voice now says, at least with clearness. You see, I am translating a strain of music into words; perhaps each would do it differently. Shall I interpret? 'Poor soul: up at last against the mysteries of the life of faith. Hast thou perceived at present no riddles in thy scheme of life? Nothing till now to hurt or break thy heart? Didst thou consider a broken heart an evil thing, and an angel in the path to be a devil? Hast thou just now for the first time seen that suffering is a mysterious thing?—that thou canst not weigh it by measure, and only for those whom thou deemest deserving of it? Hast thou, indeed, all in a moment lost sight of the Cross borne by One Who did no sin? Hast thou lost memory of what man can do for the Saviour, for "the fellowship of His sufferings"? And thy dear lad, so good, so glorious! Dost thou think he himself regrets

that pain ? Or hath he " forgot it all " ? Perchance he thanks God for that bit of his Cross more than for aught else that befell him here upon earth. Maybe it was the one thing needful for thy young knight ere he passed from thy sight. Would he be horrified at thy misunderstanding ? Nay more, thou sorrowing soul : dost thou know what terrible peril to soul as well as to body lay waiting for him just after the day when he fell sick ? Apollyon himself ? Fearful odds, worse odds than ever he had known in his life. Was it then perchance a great and crowning mercy of the most loving God which has taken thy boy from thee for a while ? So gracious was he : so pure and unstained. Then " the Lord had need of him " : and wouldst thou not spare for a few years from thy side thine only son if He " Who spared not His only Son for thee," asked him of thee ? ' The music died away and the cry of the broken heart had also ceased. Was it comforted ? Ah ! I know not : it would take time. And God gives time, has given it for countless years. Will that voice rise heavenward at length, into a higher layer ? Surely, but God whispers patience.

II

VOICES

(II)

'Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble, and mine eye is consumed for very heaviness; yea, my soul and my body.'—Ps. xxxi. 10.

VOICES: yes, the air carries them: they are the thoughts of the hearts of men and women of every race and tongue made vocal. We all sympathise with the words. 'At the last I spake with my tongue.' Sometimes because of sudden sorrow it is passionate protest at the hidden ways of God: then the heart is like a caged bird and beats against the bars till, we hope, God speaks and reveals the fact that the cage is a school: there is a door to it and a vast world outside when school life is over.

But hush! We have struck another current: do you hear? It is a different note.

See also, there is no fog round about or mist, but a dull sky without sun or wind : the very aspens are motionless. All is grey and still : and the voices seem in tune with the atmosphere. Just listen ; do not judge, only sympathise. The voices mix as they pass, but the key is the same. ' I feel crushed into a shapeless mass. I have lost interest in everything : my best loved are dead : I see nothing to look forward to : no employment and little means and few friends. Am I resigned ? I don't know. I am not reconciled, but I am not rebellious. Prayers ? Yes, I say them, out of a book, but I have no pleasure in them, no comfort in services, no use for sermons, no warmth in Holy Communion. I know no one who is like-minded ; no one understands me. All is grey : there is no sun nor moon nor stars, no faith worthy of the name. Do I believe in God ? Yes. Have I hope ? I don't know. I wish—I don't know what I wish. Do I wish to live or to die ? I don't know. Have I fears ? I don't know. My name is " Dull." I am not cold nor hot. I do not mourn, nor do I praise at all. The *Venite* irritates me. I think " I see drab." '

The voices died away though the air was so still. My companion asked, ' What do you think of it all ? ' ' I am alarmed,' I answered, ' frankly alarmed. I prefer the passionate

outburst even though it cursed God. This dull state, it is so dangerous ; it may produce any illness ; it is such a soil for the sprouting of germs and seeds ; and the air is full of poisonous seed germs. If you send for the doctor he shakes his head ; he dislikes a low vitality for the above reasons. Just so with the life of the spirit. It is like possessing a deep soil, and beckoning at the same time unconsciously to the weeds and tares to come as fast as possible. It is like the man with one talent, he won't do anything : he won't even make mistakes, but is in danger of dying of inanition. He is like the salt losing its savour. Or he is drifting to the waterfall. If only he would strike out in some direction ! But also there is another peril. It is such a soil for quack remedies, for the attacks of men or women who have confident voices. They have a new gospel ; they may call it the true gospel of Christ only now discovered. Or it may be an Eastern religion, novel to them and offering hope : or it may be a voice that says there is no such thing really as pain or sorrow, and you have only to go on repeating that belief to find it come true : or you are asked to converse with spirits who give answers, which, by the way, are excessively human and not in the least heavenly.'

'Can you put your finger on anything?'
'Yes, but tenderly: it is so human, and a human heart in sorrow needs such tenderness. You see, there is so much of the "I." "I" is the centre: God, and all things are on the circumference. It is so common, so well known to myself, that I will not judge. I only point to what I have learned in my own heart. What remedy? Well, I think the best external remedy would be the most tremendous shock that it is possible to give. A spell in the front trenches; utter financial collapse and the necessity of working the fingers to the bone to get a living, and coming home to exhaustion night after night; no time to think for twelve months. Or it may be terrible anxiety for the one friend left—anything to take one out of oneself. Better the earthquake and the fire and the hail, and wild beasts in the wilderness, than the quiet desert under a juniper tree to think of self and failure.'

But hark! the voices from above. Yes, I hear them mingling tenderly though gravely with the voices of God's frail children. They pass along; I almost see the figures of those who speak, God's messengers. There, do you see? There is Job. I see him telling how he had passed through it all and how he repented himself at length in dust and ashes, when God

appeared and the greyness vanished with the rising of the sun. And there go a whole procession of Hebrews. Do you want to hear their voices? I have only space for a few. Read Psalms xxii, xxxii, xlviii, lv, lxxvii, lxxxviii. They know all about the greyness, but you will note how they all emerge: that is the joy of the Psalms, almost without exception.

There, too, comes a noble-looking, yet unknown prophet. Listen: 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant? He that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.'

But look again. There comes an aged man of our own time, but age has left him a cheerful countenance; neither faith nor hope are dim nor love absent. Listen to him: 'How delightful to walk in half darkness: what discipline to have no horizon: of course it is only a squall and storm of rain, and will pass: walk by compass and cheer up. All times and seasons of the year are good, not only May and October: don't despise the lessons of an August afternoon when the rain refuses to come. And the twenty-four hours also of a day: early morning and dewy eve are good, but so too is the dark night without moon or stars. 'Tis so still thou canst hear stirrings otherwise

inaudible. God's creatures of the night, timid, beautiful, they are about thee. God is near thee, He is not dead because thou canst not see Him, and the Master is here, "the same yesterday and to-day, yea, and for ever." But listen again. I catch the words of Evangelists and prophets of the New Dispensation—'endureth,' 'continue,' 'steadfast.' We know the passages so well: they are among our great traditions. But again, and now the music breaks out. The Lord speaks: 'O thou of little faith.' 'It is I, be not afraid.' 'Come unto me.' 'Little children, let not your heart be troubled.' 'Wilt thou be made whole?' Let us pray that all weak Christians may be upheld, and specially in these days. But among all the weak Christians let us place ourselves in the first rank. Who knows but we may soon sink deep in the very mire which we just now have been pointing out to others?

III

VOICES

(III)

'Smitten down, yet not destroyed.'—2 Cor. iv. 9.

'How light the air feels!' 'Yes: but remember where you are. You have been rising, you are a good distance from the earth. See the very clouds have lost their dense look, they remind one now of huge white billows: the sun, too, how brilliantly it shines. You seem—don't you?—to be imbibing ozone up here, away from the germs which enter into us down there and lower our vitality.

'It is all a parable: you are in the regions where Faith and Hope are strong, and these, twin eyes of the soul, see God and hold fast to His love for man. So if you listen you will find that the voices up here have a thrill in

them which speaks of the love of God for man, love everlasting, of One Whose arms are close around us. The very earth looks dim, the eternal most real.'

'Do I not also catch the note of joy?' 'Well, yes; but it is joy in the Lord's sense: joy that is not affected by the Cross and Passion, that passes willingly through Gethsemane, and sheds drops of blood, and is still joy.'

'Is it possible?' 'More than possible: it is one of the firm experiences of thousands of God's people.' 'Tell me about them.' 'With delight. It is an inspiring theme. The voices you hear now are from those who really believe: perhaps I should say, who trust. They trust when they cannot see. They follow at times when there seems no path: still they follow by instinct, and angels are always by to guide such. Yes; but also note that there is an important ingredient in that trust. They serve. So, too, they are in consequence fast losing self; and God fills all the gaps. They serve so much that they are prepared to give, to give to God whatever He demands. That, you see, is where their faith shines so bright. It is always God—God Who asks for their gifts—Who asks for their sons or daughters, their husband or wife, or it may be their health, if so be that God calls them to endure pain or

years of feebleness and inactivity.' 'There can surely be no life so guarded as that?' 'No, none so founded upon a Rock. I think, too, I have noted, in such, another beautiful trait. Everything, all that happens, is a lesson; and a lesson from the Heavenly Father. It is glorious, is it not? Now listen to the voices. There are tears in some of them, but note the words—"Speak, thy servant heareth. What dost Thou wish me now to learn? Make this lesson plain. Dost Thou need my best loved, and so soon? I would not deny Thee what Thou needest, O Thou Who gavest for me Thine only Son."'

'Do they never rebel?' 'How could they? Self, you see, is passing; or rather, it is being transfigured. The Christian's instinct—and it becomes so by habit, by years of prayer and discipline—is at once to turn to God in every event of life. If God has not sent what seems calamity, overpowering, terrible, yet He has permitted it. And through that valley the Christian passes singing David's psalms, "I will fear no evil: Thou art with me: though He slay me yet will I trust Him." Could you see the faces of those whose voices sound up here you would note that they are all turned upward. Tears may be upon them; lines, too, deeply graven there, but not of discontent or

peevishness ; the eternal, not the temporal, is there.'

'I don't hear so many voices as I did down below.'

'No : the higher classes in the Lord's school are not very crowded. But how thankfully we who are in the lower forms gaze at our seniors of the spiritual and eternal life. It is not a question of age, of course. Some, I think, are placed in this upper class when quite young, some struggle into it bearing marks of battle : perhaps most reach it after long experience of life, and are tired travellers covered with dust who at length attain. Need I tell you that I might really have spared you this talk by reading you the words of one who was a very real member of this upper form ?

'He spoke of his knowledge of his Master as a treasure in an earthen pot ; then he told how the treasure gave him strength nothing could overcome : it prevented the earthen pot, as it were, from breaking. What compressed experience in the words : "pressed on every side, yet not straitened : perplexed, yet not unto despair : pursued, yet not forsaken : smitten down, yet not destroyed. . . . Therefore we faint not . . . our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and

more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.'

'Our "light affliction": do you think your saint would call any earthly sorrow—sorrow heaped-up, "a light affliction"?

'I am sure of it, for he adds: "the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal." The lessons of the life of faith, you see, are not enclosed into three-score years and ten: and during these few decades, as always, the power of the Holy Ghost is in you. Christ is in you, you are "in Christ." All that gift is presupposed; it is a necessary part of the faith which nothing can shake. But hark! What heavenly music is that? Hush!

'Remember that thou hast approached near unto the eternal things; the very clouds are mostly beneath thee: thou art now hearing the praises of the beings that are not of this earth, who perchance have not known sin or borne its shock or felt its stain. Yet do they understand: peradventure they have wondered at the rebel spirit or the dull despair thou rememberest to have heard below among the clouds and mists, but they have tender hearts; they understand and wait, knowing that the Lord God deals gently with the earthen vessels that have not discovered the gold within. But here, where Faith

and Hope illuminate these lives, how they burst into praise! These are the things the angels "desire to look into." Listen! all the parts of the song are in that chorus of praise, and all the instruments. There is joy in the presence of God over the children of men who serve and give what God asks and learn every lesson that life teaches.'

'Have I, too, this treasure in an earthen vessel?'

'Yes, verily, and if thou wilt give glory to God thou wilt prove thyself a miracle of grace. Wouldst thou not wish to live in this upper air? It is thy birthright. Sell it not; the world needs thee; bestow upon it the best of gifts, the life of Jesus manifested in thy mortal flesh.'

IV

VOICES

(IV)

'I became dumb, and opened not my mouth: for it was thy doing.'—Ps. xxxix. 10 (P.B.).

Is there any limit to the variations of feeling in the presence of sorrow? None, I imagine. I have made three attempts, and now proceed to a fourth. There I will cease. Perchance I may, at least, have described four common states of mind, roughly, of course; yet heart answers to heart, and it is something to recognise that we have much company as the storms rage and our dearest pass. Can anyone, however, put himself identically in the same place with another? I doubt it. The movements of the spirit of man must be even more varied than those of nature in their incredible yet real distinctions. Look at that glorious lime tree.

The million leaves stir gently in the breeze. Are any two leaves alike? Include the woods around. Or the whole of your country. Are any two leaves anywhere exactly alike? The blades of grass on those lawns, can you show two precisely similar? So with man. Each child of God has his own path homeward. God alone knows his exact thoughts, feelings, sorrows, longings, penitence, and hopes. How then can we help others? I suggest two methods. First by understanding. Respect the sorrow of your friend. And as to comfort, your insight must decide what may help and what may hurt. With some you can hardly be too reticent. A grasp of the hand suffices, more would offend. There are sensitive souls with whom, if you speak much or press upon them, it is intermeddling. Silently you stand and wait, and they are comforted. Others there are so made that they need speech and much of it. If you leave them they imagine themselves neglected. Others, again, will be inexpressibly comforted by a letter, a letter of the right sort: but it is hard to write it. There is too, I think, a second method—namely, by giving your own experience. There is a human touch in so doing. The pained heart looks into another heart. The experience may be quite a different sort, or there may be some-

thing almost identical in it. No matter which : to meet a brother or sister in sorrow and just to hear the tale, and how it affects them, this comforts.

Judge now whether I describe a fourth group of sufferers to-day. Readers of Conrad's books will remember how he describes the truly appalling effect of a typhoon. When the hurricane is at its height there is no heavy sea because the gale flattens down the very waves, cuts them off, converts them into spray ; but the waves cannot so much as lift their heads. That awful and, of course, temporary effect can be paralleled in our own lives. There may be trouble so great, so piled up one upon the other, that the effect is stunning. Feeling is crushed. It is not that there is no feeling ; there is too much of it, and the nerves are paralysed. Ask the man who has been seized and shaken by a lion, and has lived to recount his experience. He will tell you that he had no feeling of pain or fear, nothing but a sense of curiosity as to what would happen next. Something like it you will meet with in life's greatest sorrows. Mistake it not for callousness. That soul is numbed. Stand by and be silent. Pray that when the weight of the shock is lightened the waves may not engulf the ship. The same stunning effect of calamity or of the

approach of death can be illustrated by the action and demeanour of persons confronted with loss of everything upon the high seas. I doubt not it has been a common experience of late round these shores from a hidden enemy. A survivor of the ship *London*, which slowly foundered some forty years ago with almost all the passengers and crew, was asked how the people, especially the passengers, behaved as they awaited what appeared to be certain death. He answered that the men and women, as the ship slowly filled with water, were walking up and down the deck just as if they were waiting for a train upon a railway platform. They were in the presence of the greatest realities, so great that it brought a dignity into their deportment. Some, no doubt, were happy in assured faith, always ready, perhaps waiting long to be with Christ. Others, hitherto careless of God, or young and never having given a thought to death, the one almost unimaginable event, looked at the approaching messenger almost with curiosity, as with the man in the lion's grip. It was not a time to show much feeling. The times were too great for that. Officers and soldiers at the Front in the War tell us that it is the same with them. They are not hardhearted, but the realities of warfare are too thick around them to permit of

emotion. Comrades fall: it is in the day's work. They pass on to the attack: they meet at the meal afterwards and recount the losses as part of their business. The hurricane of war has flattened the waves of emotion. They may write a line to the bereaved—parent or wife—full of appreciation and of sorrow, but the King's business brooks not of much emotion. The day may come when they may be appalled at the shattering of hopes and ideals. That will be when the waves have liberty to rise, but not yet. There are many to-day who just in the same way trust in God and go on. They meet a friend and hear he has lost a son, two sons. There is nothing to do but to grasp his hand, and look into his eyes and be silent. He understands. The hurricane is at its height. The time for words has not come, perchance it will never arrive. 'I became dumb, and opened not my mouth: for it was thy doing.' That is very fine. Coming in one of the funeral Psalms with many other verses, perhaps you have not noted how it describes the feelings of a whole class of persons struck dumb. Not callous; no, far from it. They don't cease to look up. 'It was Thy doing.' That suffices. You must have an understanding heart. There are sorrows too great for words, too deep for outward feeling.

Hush! The hurricane is at its height, sweeping over mortal men. Wait awhile, awestruck. You cannot do much but pray. Pray that the good ship may rise above the waves when they do arise, and come safe to port. 'It was Thy doing.' Don't ask whether those words are really whispered. Take for granted that they are. Credit men and women in these times with silent courage and a strong faith, and patience to endure 'until this tyranny be overpast.'

V

OLD AND NEW

'Is there a thing whereof men say, See, this is new? It hath been already, in the ages which were before us.'—ECCLES. i. 10.

AFTER I read it my companion interrupted, 'The preacher is, of course, a pessimist: apparently he is unhappy because there is nothing new.' It set one thinking: why indeed should we wish for newness? Is not the old good? The love of God, the old, old story, the eternal patience of the Heavenly Father, His method of training mankind, the old paths? I said, 'You have much experience, sir. Is there anything new? Do we need anything new?' He answered, 'I think all the best things, aye, and all the worst things, remain for every age—at present. God and sin, the great mystery of life, the knowledge of God, the experience of sin, I don't believe there is anything to add

to the knowledge already possessed by humanity —at present. You remember what Bishop Westcott calls humanity, quoting, I think, from Pascal: 'the man who lives for ever.' I may be wrong, but it seems to me that spiritual knowledge already attained by humanity leaves nothing new to be discovered on this side of the grave. Of course, we have to apply that knowledge to the facts of our own day, but the knowledge as already gained by God's children is our assured heritage. The knowledge of God, as already known by *some in every age*, I do not think you can surpass it. Hereafter beyond the veil there may be vast progress, nay, there must and will be: but here, where we see in a glass darkly, I am struck by the fact that man repeats what some of his brethren have already known, and have known perhaps in every age since Christ came. So also with the longings of the heart for God: there is nothing really new for us in them. Do you think there is any spiritual feeling not already caught up and expressed in the Psalms? I doubt it. And as a Christian, using Christian language, do you think there is any height of love or any depth of contrition, or any insight into spiritual truth which has not already been discovered by God's people in Christ?' 'Do you think, then,

said I, 'that there is nothing further for us ourselves to enunciate, to use our own language for it, in prayer, and praise, and teaching?' 'Every reason to enunciate,' he replied, hastily, 'every reason to repeat, to go over and over again all that has been said in every age. That is one of the remarkable facts about spiritual experience. Every generation has to re-state that experience for itself. It is done in language suited to that generation and not quite suited to any other. There is nothing new in the substance: it is always new to each age in its utterance.' 'Are you glad, sir?' 'Yes, I I am,' said he; 'there is nothing which so tenderly brings home to me the fact that I am being educated in the same old school, the school in which my ancestors were taught, the school appointed by my Heavenly Father for all His children: nothing helps me so well to realise that we are one family in Him; and nothing so clearly proves to me that this world is but a school for higher education beyond. It is the elementary school for each generation, no more. But if so, what is beyond? It is for that I wait.' 'Is that also the lesson of nature, sir?' 'Very much the contrary, I think,' he answered. 'In knowledge of this earth and all its contents, and its powers, each generation leaps forward: you might almost

say that everything in each age is new—new knowledge based upon the labours of the past.' He paused and seemed lost in contemplation. Then he continued: 'Wonderful, is it not? that concerning the deepest things, God has given us such knowledge that man can only in his short life learn what has already been known by his ancestors. The heavenly and eternal things are the property of every age among the highest and best. All the things best worth knowing, which give us faith, hope, and love, which are not temporary, these things have been already revealed. The earthly things, those which deal with our first, our temporary home, these things are not nearly yet discovered because they are left to the industry of man to lay open, and to thank God for ever-extending knowledge.

'Christ and His life, His words, His acts —they contain all the knowledge attainable by men this side the veil. Some in every age have gone as far as it is possible to go here upon earth by spiritual men. But no one has yet dreamed of the forces of the earth and its gifts and its beauties which future generations yet have to discover.' 'Is it really so,' I murmured, 'is it really impossible to rise to heights of nobility and self-surrender above those already gained?' 'Well,' he answered, 'look at the most conspicuous acts of bravery

and patriotism and courage as set forth in the Great War. Nothing can be finer. Highly educated men, with cultivated imaginations, and not trained for life for war, perform acts of surpassing bravery. There is no flinching, there are no stragglers. They suffer and they die. The graves of heroes crowd the fields. Yet there is nothing new in that. They are merely carrying on the traditions of their regiments. They cannot raise those traditions. Read the names inscribed on their Colours. Take up the history of Marlborough's campaigns. Read Napier's "Battles and Sieges of the Peninsular War." Exactly what is happening now happened then. We are one family, and how we rejoice at it.

'Then the longings and yearnings of the human heart for the best for God, can you surpass, as I have already said, the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the saintly in every age? But let us go back, far further back, beyond them. The best non-Christians since the Christian era, the best in ages before the Christian era, and perhaps in every civilised land—I wonder whether many of us in these last days have risen higher than did some who possessed but a tithe of our light. How it unites us to the human family, and to God the Father of all!'

We were silent; then after awhile I said, 'There is another side, sir, to this subject: you just mentioned it and no more. The knowledge of evil, you said, was complete in every age in some. Do you think so?' He did not answer for awhile, then he said, 'I do not believe there is any sin which is not common to every age somewhere and in some. Nay, I believe that for most of us there is a vast and awful community of temptation. We are all reticent about it; rightly so, I think, but wherever you lift the veil you find a strange similarity of suggested evil, and, therefore, in some, of committed sin.' He turned to me with a great tenderness, and continued: 'People sometimes speak as if one of the dreadful forebodings about the Day of Judgment were the fact that the sins of all of us would then stand revealed to all; as if our own thoughts of evil, and deeds, too, would strike horror into the myriads there assembled. I really do not think we shall any of us be horrified; we shall find we have a common experience. Our hearts will all be broken, as it were, together. There will arise within us an increased tenderness towards our brethren because of the common, strangely common, experiences of all of us, especially, of course, in thoughts and temptations. It will be seen, so it seems to me,

that we shall all murmur, "The same enemy has assaulted us all with the same weapons." Brethren indeed are we, with the same blessings, and the same tempter at our hearts and lives.' I was much moved. 'Yes,' I answered, 'I believe you are right, and it is a subject full as much of tenderness as of awe and wonder.' So we parted; and as for me, I went away to meditate on what I had learnt.

VI

RELIGIOUS TEMPERAMENTS

'There are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all.'—1 Cor. xii. 6.

Nothing is more necessary to-day, in the Church as in the State, than to recognise permanent differences of standpoint, outlook, attitude (whatever you may call it) among earnest men. Shall we consider it on the spiritual side? Very well: watch those three men, all Churchmen. They are permanent types, and indispensable types. You can tell by their poise, look, and even dress, that though earnest and devoted Christians they move on different levels: their chief nourishment of soul and spirit differs. Let them meditate for you, and in answer to a question, the same question, privately put to each of them. Listen, they are preparing their separate response.

I. 'I have found peace; I am not ashamed to say it, for it is a fact. Out of a great struggle I have emerged, and I am at rest. It is all God's doing, I was helpless. I had found myself sinking into destruction. The evil one, personal and terrible, was present. My sins had taken such hold upon me that I could not look up. I could do nothing good. My righteousness was as filthy rags. Help must come from God and from God alone. I could not win salvation. It must be won for me: then it was that faith saved me. I threw myself upon One Who called, "Come unto Me." I came and He cleansed me, and in His own Blood. He had atoned for me, and in Him I have found peace. He has given me the Holy Spirit from the Father. I have believed in Him, and He has given me power to live in Him, for Him, through Him. Outside Him I see nothing: in Him everything. And all my life is given to Him as the Way, the Truth, the Life. And as I look out upon the world there is one great longing which overpowers all other desires—namely, to bring all men to Him that they may win what I have won—they, all my family, my nation, the whole world. In Him is light and life. Outside Him is darkness and death for all mankind. Do you ask what I think of means of Grace? I haven't much to say. Of

course, I value all means: of course, I obey the Lord's commands and do gladly all He enjoined. I simply live on the Scriptures. Prayer is the daily, hourly food of my soul. By faith I have been brought so close to my Saviour that were I asked to enumerate my means of Grace, I can only answer, I have one only—Christ and His Spirit. By faith I have been saved: by faith I stand. He is my Alpha and Omega, Who has brought me back—washed, atoned for, born again, to the Father.' Remember he is a type, no more.

II. Listen, again, to another voice.

'The two great facts most real to me have been God and evil. Believing in God Almighty, all loving, I cannot explain the existence of evil. But there it is, and I have felt myself an atom, tossed helplessly about. God calls me: so does my evil nature: two voices bewilder me. And I have prayed and searched for help, and I have found it. The great news dawned upon me at length. Of course I had heard of it often, but at length I realised. God has built His Church on earth. To it He has given powers, potencies, promises. The Only Begotten of the Father, Who came to live and to die for us, founded the Church to save the world. To it He gave the promise of the Holy Ghost from the Father. He breathed upon

the Apostles who were to found the Church. He promised to be with His Church for ever. The gates of hell should never prevail against it. And my soul rejoiced. I thanked the God of my Fathers that He had given me a place in His Church so created. In it is salvation and all promised powers, and pardons, and aids. Outside it there are, of course, all God's mercies. I could never put a limit to them: but within the Church only can I see a covenant with God. And it is this covenanted mercy, this assurance given me within the Church so founded, so sustained, that makes me full of lifelong gratitude: it is for me the shadow of a great rock, a ship upon the waves, an army with banners. And as I gaze at the treasures of the Church I know that I can never fully fathom their glory, but I rest upon them, assured of them, by Divine authority. Holy Baptism: that is the door. Without it I am outside: with it I am within, with all the treasures that man can need upon his journey to God. The Sacrament of the Body and the Blood: there it is, completely satisfying, overwhelming in awe. The great gift of Christ Himself, His actual Presence upon its altars, for the support of spiritual life, guarded by every care. Of course, it is so guarded, for it is the central means of Grace for all time, not

only for me as an individual, but for the body corporate, showing forth for ever the One Perfect Sacrifice. I have learnt what it is to feed on Christ our life. Again it is this Church which has given us the Scriptures. Think of it! The gift is almost overwhelming to our thought. The Church it is which gave us the Gospels; and moreover—still greater mercy—it explains them. So the structure of the Church, its Ministry, its Creed, its Order, and Discipline, all are of awful import. It is our Ark of the Covenant. It is the "Deposit" which we received, which we are called to hand on intact. All the goodness of God, His mercy, His love, His care for us is enclosed in the Church which the Lord founded. Therefore it is that the past history of the Church is of such grave importance to us. We look backward as well as forward. We live in the Communion of Saints, one body, some on this side the veil, some on that. Through all the ages we are one, with one life within the Church, where His Presence is assured, and His Spirit never absent to warm, feed, teach, convict, pardon, sanctify.' Another type, you see.

III. But you are eager to listen to the third brother.

'Whenever I look I see God at work among all men, in all things. He shines as the sun

on all creation and is its life. Shadows there are, depths also full of dread, but these can only be incompleteness in some mysterious sense. God is Love, and He it is Who guides all to a perfect end. All men have, of course, heard His voice: there is good in all: there is good in all beliefs, and there is depth in the rites of all nations and religions. So also there is inspiration in the highest thoughts of all good men. How may we judge of truth? Why, of course, by the reason God has given us. We cannot use it too fully, testing every voice, listening to every new utterance or message from any quarter, expecting truth from anywhere. Nor is there any doubt whatever as to the quarter from which has come the highest spiritual truth, from the Hebrew race, chosen for this purpose. Nor is there in the world anyone comparable with Our Lord Christ. He has revealed God to man as none else. Rightly is He called Son of God, the only Son. He has shown us the ideal of humanity, and the vision of the Father. But I have ever had a distaste for theological terms about Him. Who can define Christ? No one, except, perhaps, for his own age, and therefore incompletely. Words can but give a partial view, and as the centuries pass new truth about Him emerges. There are articles of the Church's

old Creed about which I have doubts. They are archaic, they do not seem able to represent the later and fuller knowledge of to-day; and surely the same Spirit is guiding us into truth as guided the Apostles. And the Churches also: how they have erred: how full of human weakness: how they seem to circumscribe the love of God. Is the Church indeed, as we know it, likely to be the Church of the future? Is the truth about God and His Christ to be defined by terms fixed centuries ago? The Scriptures, too; must they not be sifted more and more? Is it not likely that even some of the great facts of the Gospel story may have to be re-stated in very different terms? I am not alarmed. The great love of God for all humanity works its own way. I am prepared for great changes, for changes at the very thought of which some brother Churchmen shudder.' So the three brothers meditate and pass.

Well: what do you think? Shall I attempt to voice your feelings? And, first, you will say that probably no Churchman holds exactly any of those views. I agree. The combinations are infinite. The above are tendencies, nothing more: but they are permanent tendencies. I have personally lived at different times on all three. I hope I still possess the true contribu-

tion of each. And each such tendency has its own special peril attached, as well as its gift for good. Each needs to be guarded, braced, aided, by the others. And the Catholic Church is nothing if not hospitable. It ought to be tender towards tendencies, guiding rather than anathematising. It ought not to hurry. It ought to have so great a trust in its own treasures and safeguards and depths, that the wranglings of men ought to be looked upon more as the froth on the wave than as a troubling of the deep. Above all, it ought to rejoice in days of mental and spiritual activity, especially when men eagerly seek for truth. The Church should dread above all things the calms which breed plague, and need the hurricanes to bring back health. Of late years we have experienced the calms, and to-day the hurricane is upon us. Let such days draw us closer together: let us understand each other and credit each other as truth-seekers within the Catholic Church. Let us each acknowledge that we need the aid of others to preserve ourselves from our own special dangers.

VII

ONE BISHOP, ONE DIOCESE

'There is one body, and one Spirit.'—EPH. iv. 4.

'YOU know there has been a proposal to create a racial Episcopate?' 'Yes.' 'What do you think?' My friend answered 'I have been in trouble about it. I think we have drawn near to one of the precipices.' 'Do take up your parable.' 'Gladly,' he answered. 'But first let me state the case, and give you my definition. To begin with, of course I am not surprised at the suggestion. It is a natural short cut in a time of perplexity; yet it seems to me that it is not even "the longest way round." It is a *cul-de-sac* from which one has to return. The project is born because somewhere two races are living together, but without mixing. One is superior to the other in qualities of strength, force, leadership.

Colour also comes in. Time passes, and the two races, though baptised into the one Church and in full communion, do not draw nearer together. Needless to say, the explanation of the difficulty may lie largely in the history of the past. It is so hard to forget the past. There it lies, and you have to build upon it. The problem, indeed, might in some shape crop up in every Continent. That is why I am troubled: that is why I want to clear my own mind; let me think aloud.

'There is a further and most touching side to it. In some regions the coloured race has been forced to come in as a slave race, forced from its home under circumstances which we would gladly forget. In time they have settled down: centuries pass, and yet there is such a gulf between the two races in the one region that, as a counsel of despair and to avert a scandal, the proposal comes to create two separate Churches, each with its own Orders—of course in communion—and each separately responsible for its own future and moral and spiritual discipline. Yet the two races live together in the same district, the same towns, the same streets, even in the same houses.

'Or, again, a like proposal may easily be made ere long in some other region of the

earth where one race has come in as a conquering race, and has evangelised the indigenous race; and now, because a vexing gap between the two races continues within the same communion, the proposal may come, "Let us have two separate Churches."

'There, once again, in my opinion, yawns the precipice. Of course the proposal does not refer to the creation of a National Church among the indigenous race. That would be altogether delightful. But then, naturally the race that once was the conqueror and then the evangeliser would gladly become a member of this newly organised, indigenous, National Church, accepting its rulers and obeying its canons, unless they were simply visitors and birds of passage.

'I think that is a fair statement of the position, and now I ask a question and a searching one. Is the proposal made because it is believed that the humbler race will be mentally, morally, spiritually raised by it? Or is it because it would remove a perplexing and humiliating perplexity from the possibly stronger race of another colour? I think that question goes home. It does so to me. If I moved such a resolution I know I should have done so, perhaps unconsciously, in a selfish spirit—that is, to escape from vexation, and

to get rid of a reproach. It would be the strong getting rid of the weak. If it were a question of colour, then it is akin to avoiding "the white man's burden." But I have another arrow to loose: it is vexing to ask the question, but it must be faced if the proposal is made. What of the half-caste people and of any slightest strain of admixture between two such races? It is a sad question to ask, but it gives us all a better glimpse of the precipice in front if we acceded to the proposal. At the bottom of that precipice is, so to speak, a most forbidding morass.

'One more question. Has this proposal in its general outlines been already accepted anywhere? The answer, of course, is "Yes, here and there, by those whom we call the separated brethren." With success? No, no; it has been bad for the weaker race, the race which has been mixed up with the evils, the vices, the influences of every sort from the stronger race: but without its full help, for its own discipline, spiritual and moral.

'And now the Catholic Church may have to face at any moment a proposal to follow suit; the Catholic Church, remember, which knows it will live to the end, and, therefore, has to look carefully what foundations it lays for the Church of one thousand or two thousand

years hence. Survey the world. See how easily this proposal might be made, with all its consequences, in India, in Africa (North, South, East, and West), in the United States, in South America: indeed, almost everywhere. In some new regions, in the Americas, for example, there are a dozen distinct races intermingled socially. Would anyone suggest a dozen separate Churches in the same district, each with its bishops, clergy, and synods?'

My friend paused, merely adding, 'I hope I have stated the problem fairly. It is at least the way in which it appears to me when I face it.'

'I am all impatience,' I answered, 'to hear more.'

'Well, there is the Catholic Church as we have inherited it, the one hope for realising the brotherhood of man in the world. I see no other hope. It must be a spiritual brotherhood. I see no hope in a brotherhood of labour, national or international. There are too many selfish interests in all such organisms. In the ideal of the Catholic Church there ought to be none. Pick out the outlines of that ideal set forth in the New Testament. Begin with John xvii, pass on to St. Paul and the other interpreters. If race and colour cannot live together within the one Church in the same

region, then the future is very dark. If within the Catholic Church we are not learning how the strong can bear up the weak, how child races may have their happy place side by side with the elder races, how class differences may fade away at the one altar, how the Church in one place regardless of race is one family, then the future is very, very dark. Is it a difficult building up of the Church ? Of course. Why man, we are face to face now with one of the two great, most fundamental, most difficult, revelations from God—the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man. These are the pillars, too good to believe in if you will : and then you see the reason why they had to be revealed.

'Difficult ! yes, indeed ; that is a proof that they are above us ; a dream which we have to make come true.'

'I see,' I answered. 'What, then, is your idea of the irreducible minimum of Catholic organisation ?' He replied at once, 'One bishop, one diocese, one church. That is the bed rock. On that I see no reason why you may not fashion very varied edifices. You may have two or more sub-synods or conferences. You may have, for convenience in many places, different Church buildings. Language, education, temperament, all these

vary, and may be suitably dealt with. But yearly, somehow, not less than yearly, all should meet at one common altar. I have seen it done in India. Somewhere, somehow, there should be some such outward and visible and unmistakable sign of an inward and spiritual Church, one body. I apologise for even suggesting such a minimum of social unity, for Churchmen have already in some regions long ago lost sight of all such difficulties : and of course in all synods of the one diocese, or in sub-synods, or conferences, the one bishop, the symbol of unity, presides. Under him may be suffragans, assistants, or any form of suitable ministry, any degree of local and partial self-government.' My friend ended, and I thought he had ceased to enlarge upon his theme. It was not so. In a voice specially tender, and reminiscent apparently of Old Testament history, he proceeded to murmur, ' And Nathan came to the rulers of the Church and said, " There was a father who had many sons and a large dwelling-place wherein they lived for many years. There dwelt also with him certain slaves whom he had captured that they might plough his fields and give him increase in riches and plenty. Now it came to pass that some of the sons were young, and some also were wayward

and the time came that they disturbed the peace of the rich man and hurt his house; moreover, they were not quick to learn all that he himself had been taught by his forefathers of old. So the rich man waxed impatient, and he called unto him his sons and he said unto them, 'I have no more patience with you: I may not send you far away from this house, for there is for you no other abiding place. But I will see your faces no more. Ye have your rooms, dwell in them: here is money to buy yourselves provisions, but I pray you disturb me not in my portion of the house. Ye have your liberty. I hope ye will not go astray. If ye do, ye will know that it is not my doing; I am no longer your keeper, though ye dwell in this house.'" And the rulers of the Church were silent, for they perceived that Nathan had spoken of what might be in the thoughts of their hearts.' My friend ceased. 'Have I been dreaming? I thought I heard the prophet Nathan speaking.' For my part I went my way to consider these and other like things.

VIII

SPIRITUAL LEADERS

'If thou seest a man of understanding, get thee betimes unto him, and let thy foot wear the steps of his door.'—Ecclus. vi. 36.

It was after a Retreat. Twenty laymen had attended it and a general request was sent to their director for a Conference ere they parted. Their spokesman opened the subject. 'A good many of us, sir, have not made much use of books of devotion. You have spoken of them and we have been using those you have provided. But we lack guidance; will you help us?' The priest assented. 'I will gladly give you my own experience. This at least I can say, I owe an infinite debt to such books. My own thoughts would have been of a still more superficial character even than they are without their stimulus. But I had better curtail my subject; too vast is it

to be tackled except in divisions. With your leave, I will put aside the greatest book, the Bible. Moreover, I will point you only to those you have had before you here : St. Augustine's " Confessions," the " Imitation," Law's " Serious Call," Bishop Andrewes' ' Devotions," " The Christian Year," Pascal's " Thoughts," the " Poems " of Henry Vaughan, the " Pilgrim's Progress." Candidly those are enough for a life-time : and yet they differ so much from each other that they would not pall.

' Now for some general principles. These have stood the test of time ; that is a great point. Doubtless there are some now being written which may endure, but one cannot tell, so very few do. A book that has lived out of its own generation is worthy of reverence, and something it must have of the eternal in it. I put this in the forefront, for it leads me to my next point, namely, that you ought to address yourself seriously to such a book. There is gold in it, but it may take much digging.

' Now accept my first hint. Make clear to yourself the writer's history and place in time ; also his general outlook, also his limitations. Discount the latter before you begin. Make up for them by the study of some other guide.

Next—and this I have found of utmost importance—when you study a book, do not merely read with the eyes. Read with the lips, not necessarily aloud, though even this, when you are alone, has value. Remember that you are face to face with the deep thoughts of a man who, as it were, dipped his pen in his heart and wrote with a thrill. You cannot catch his message unless you are slow and deliberate, and I do not believe anyone can be deliberate enough who merely reads with his eyes. For the same reason, do not read too much. Sometimes half a dozen lines will give you all you want for twenty minutes, and one lesson so digested is better than several which blurr each others' edges. I think any one of the books I have mentioned would last for six months' daily reading. At the same time I do not myself find it good to read one such book too continuously. Remember the writer's limitations. You want to correct these. Perhaps a week is enough at a time for one book; then change to another and in due time return to the first. On the other hand you may find one of these masters of the spiritual life so akin to your own nature that you cannot part from him. You may even read him twice over or ten times. If you do, you will find more probably in him than you

discovered at the previous readings, however deliberately you read him.'

Here one of the company intervened. 'Do you think, sir, there can be anything new to be said on spiritual questions, anything that has not been already said?' 'That is a question I am always putting to myself,' answered the priest. 'It seems to me that the needs and longings and cries of the soul are the same in every age. St. Augustine's "Confessions" are completely modern. So are the Psalms and the Prophets. On the other hand each generation has its own accent. How is it with music? Can there be anything new in music, except the accent or whatever the right word is?' 'Yes, but,' said another of the company, 'would not the spiritual experience of different races vary?' 'I wonder again,' answered the director, 'except in accent, I think the same experiences emerge in every race. All the longings of every race seem to me to be the same when you go deep enough. All want God, as revealed in His Son. And the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, are the same everywhere, if you take a large view of them. Nor do I think there is anything which gives the human race such a family feeling. In the deeps of humanity we are alike.'

Here another of the company spoke. 'What do you consider to be the predominant note struck in the musings and records of spiritual men?' The priest was silent for some time, not because he did not know, but because he seemed to know so well. 'I do not see how you can expect, upon the whole—remember I say, upon the whole—aught but a grave tone in all introspection. I won't call it sombre, but the minor key predominates. Thanksgiving emerges, but it is the exception. When a man searches the ground of his heart and examines his thoughts, when he does it upon his knees in the holy place, when he uncovers his heart and seeks to know himself, what can you expect but gravity? When you come into Retreat you leave proud thoughts behind. You approach God and you fall upon your face. When you write of your life's history, you are a very humiliated being. Gratitude bursts out, but the General Confession in our Prayer Book predominates.'

There was no doubt that the company assented. At length one of the eldest present said, 'What, sir, is your own favourite meditation now?' and he looked at the priest's white hairs. Again the silence: then, 'The Penitential Psalms.' After a while he proceeded, 'But let us make no mistake,

gentlemen ; after searching within he is a poor follower of the Lord who does not lift up his heart and burst into praise, "We praise Thee, we worship Thee, we bless and glorify Thee." Let us be of good cheer, let us trust and go forward.'

IX

PROPS

(I)

'Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?'—2 KINGS ii. 3.

I WAS walking with him, a revered friend, of many sorrows and ripe wisdom, a great comforter of others: we had come to a street in the building, and of every degree of it. Some houses hardly above the basement; the first poles of the scaffolding were being erected: others up to the second or third story; some with their scaffolding completed, and again further along the roofs of others were finished and the poles were being lowered. In the far distance were dwellings clear of the signs of the builder, and now smoke issued from the chimneys, lights gleamed from the windows: life clearly reigned within.

My friend had ceased his walk. 'Look,' he said, 'there is life laid out before you, life as I know it. Do you see?' 'I think I do,' I answered; 'our life here in its growth, and the props of it appearing and disappearing.' 'Yes, yes,' he said, 'then you understand?' 'Partly, but not as you; I shall spoil it; tell me the parable.' He looked up and down the street; his eyes wandered and watched. 'Yes, the props coming and going: coming so tenderly for us, going, remember, with equal tenderness. There all along you have life—childhood, youth, manhood, age—all under the Master Builder. Look at those first poles, the lowermost tier you know they are, just the promise of a habitation: you cannot tell yet how many stories, nor whether beauty will set its mark on it: whether the perfect lines will delight or whether ugliness comes, or meretricious ornament. Trust the architect.

'Look further along. There are the houses completed. The commonplace, the ugly, and the beauties; count them; be tender towards their personality for now they have that.'

So we watched, till I said, 'I think I feel most for that building over there from which the props are being removed. Don't you think it looks forlorn? It seems to cry out.' 'My own thoughts too,' exclaimed my companion.

'It takes me far back into myself. The parable is easy to read now. Far, far away now are the days when by me props were very much taken for granted. They grew and multiplied. Parents were with me still. Brothers came and sisters; then friends and schoolfellows; teachers too, who became our prophets; benefactors who placed us in life; counsellors who warned us of dangers. Still the scaffolding grew: marriage, the family, the community of our social life. How rich the years! What stage have we reached? Forty? Nay, perhaps fifty years? And then is the roof on the house? What do you make of that? Well, just this: there are no more stories to your house of life. That is, you know your limitations now. You know what you can do, you know what you cannot do. Both comfort us, for we begin to see what God meant us for here.

'But the props are fast disappearing: yes, be tender towards that house over there. The props fall, fall. The building fears. Will it, can it stand? It has now a sort of naked feeling, no defence against the rains, or the strain of the storms. Must the poles and the ropes all go? Yes, my friend, right down to the ground. Not till then will life enter. Props and scaffolding round an empty house, with purpose unfulfilled? No, no. Let the props

go : let the last be torn out of the ground : let life enter, and understanding : and the thought of the architect will be revealed.'

So with a rush my friend reviewed life as it had left its marks on face and character.

Then I spoke again. 'I suppose there is tragedy still lying in wait for that building now cleared of all its scaffolding?' 'Yes, yes,' answered my master; 'what if the purpose of the architect is never fulfilled? What if the house never receives its promised life, its light, its heat, the merry voices of children? You know how the empty rooms decay. Cold and damp and neglect work quick ruin. No part of the parable is more alive with sad meaning than the house all outwardly complete and inwardly undone.' 'You mean,' said I, 'that the Father's plan for us is all astray when He, His Spirit, does not fill our life?' 'Ah me,' he answered, 'the pity of it, when we cannot pass from human love on to Him who gave us all passing comforts that we might recognise the great, the eternal love. All human relationships, the best, the dearest, are but shadows, types, foretastes of the love of the Divine Father, Brother, Comforter, the abiding Master and Friend, the Saviour Who is here and yet has gone before. I have heard a mother say, "I am the most miserable woman

in the world. I have lost ''—what ? A prop, an earthly one. Compared with the everlasting arms, the tenderest human company is scaffolding. One by one they pass.' Again a pause. 'But the parable is now transmuted into spiritual reality. All they who helped us most, our own flesh and blood, all have passed on. Could they speak from beyond the veil, how they would look sadly at us ! They would say, " Have faith : we were lent to you by the eternal Love not to be indispensable to you, but to lift your eyes unto the hills. Our memories are now meant to clear your vision, not to be as clouds to hide the Giver of all good things. Do not make us mourn as those who have broken your heart. We are not dead : we shall meet again : have faith : turn us not into a curse. Were we to you God's best blessing ? Crown it then by fulfilling the purpose for which we were lent to you. You cannot doubt what that purpose is.'' '

He ceased, and I knew that I was listening to the lessons learnt by one who had loved and lost, but who had been led to go on loving, not only all who had been dear to him here, but the truths too which had become better known through all the changes and chances of this mortal life : the mortal interpreting the immortal. And I prayed that such for me too

might be the record of my own earthly education, not only for my own soul's salvation, but that I might be fit to comfort others whom I might meet, to heal the bleeding feet, and wipe the tears and support the frames of fellow-travellers upon life's way.

X

PROPS

(II)

'The teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement.'—HEB. vi. 2.

As we walked homeward, I asked, 'What of the Church's spiritual props—temporary or permanent?' My friend turned at once. 'I have been every minute expecting you to ask that. The thought follows, does not it, after the vision of that street? You want my opinion?' 'Please.' 'I have wandered through the whole length and breadth of the subject; so, surely, have most English Churchmen. We are not warned off from thinking. "Prove all things"—how that goes straight to the heart of our race! We accept the Church's teaching, then we test it, some of us

every bit of it, even the most sacred truths, the very facts of the Gospel, the very existence of God. Strange and awful power of the intellect, God-given! It makes human life so wonderful. It sets out, in some cases gaily (Oh, youth! youth!), to walk through a land filled with devils, goblins, poisoned darts, and fiery pits: but also in the presence of guardian angels, and of Him Who walked the way before, and watches. Some people lightly conjecture that for æons upon æons this process of working out our own salvation intellectually and spiritually is to be repeated till we ourselves win our own purification.'. . . . My friend's face took its intensest expression. 'No, no, not that, O God. Otherwise must the Lord of Glory be crucified again and again in all the myriad worlds, through all the unnumbered ages of eternity. One life enough in "time." Then—then faith, hope, and love abide in the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. I wish to know no more: I may be a coward, but as I glance backward I shudder at the road on which Apollyon seems ever to walk. Could man endure repeated lives of probation, as Orientals dream? No, not with our dim sight and weak faith. The Glad Tidings promise that, whatever of purification and development may await us, we are to

be with Christ, to be with Christ: that suffices.'

My friend did not often thus give way, but he seemed to have forgotten my presence.

'Spiritual props—you asked about them. The Englishman, you know, has a constitutional suspicion of outward aids for spiritual life; it is a remarkable fact. He makes the strongest distinction between soul and body, and can hardly see how matter can be an aid to spirit. I don't suppose there is any word of Isaiah's which goes straight to his heart more quickly than: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; . . . your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth." He dreads being thought a hypocrite by the use of outward acts.

'For my part, I understand him. I think his attitude, his limitation if you like to call it that, is a valuable asset: it guarantees reformation; but then also it warns us of our characteristic peril—namely, the belief that we can stand alone and neglect helps God-given. Helps; what are they? Three stand out, don't they? because Christ-given. The Church, and the two Sacraments He ordained for the use of all. . . . Ah me! I have belittled them all in turn, like an Englishman.

I have said, what has the spiritual man to do with outward scaffolding as he progresses heavenward? Ought it not all to come down till at length he is like that house at the end of that street, all spirit, no body?' We stopped and looked back: this was the very centre of my own perplexities. 'You see,' he proceeded, still looking at the house cleared of scaffolding, 'the Englishman's character tends towards Unitarianism.' 'What!' I said. 'Yes'; he said, with a puzzled look, '"Why should there be need of the Incarnation?" That is what an Englishman's intellect often asks. He doesn't see the need of it. With reverence be it said, he asks why God should need to decree what He has. It perplexes him, and I think it is the same difficulty which I have already stated, he sees no connection between spirit and matter, supposing that they are distinct and opposed. Years pass and at length the Spirit opens windows; he is humbler and says: "My Lord and my God!" Now look again at the house without scaffolding. Why should not a man do without Sacraments? Is not anything outward mere scaffolding? Meant only for the immature? We question even the Lord's meaning, or we say, "He never commanded them: it was the doing of

men inserted into the Book."' 'I have thought all that, sir,' I said. 'Of course you have, being what you are, an individualist first before you are much more. Then you come to such words as "the doctrine of baptisms, and of the laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." What a collocation! almost a bathos, you would have said; the very great and the very small. And now I ask: Are the Church and its ministry, are the two Sacraments, scaffolding at all? As I grow older I feel more and more glad to say they are part of the building. You know how those walls over there were built? With great iron girders buried in concrete. That does not seem to me to be very unlike the Church and its ministry, and the Sacraments ordained by Christ for all. Iron girders, part of the fabric.' And I looked at the house, and was glad. Then, 'Say a word, sir, for what we call "matter."' 'Yes, indeed,' he replied, 'and with gladness. With greater and greater joy I have come to see that we are bound up with all the rest of creation. We are not independent of other created things. We cannot sustain even physical life without feeding on created things. And it seems to me that the Lord who said, "God is Spirit," opened also for us a very wonderful window into truth

when He instituted for us the use of water, and of bread and wine, as a means for the sustenance of our spirits. What a fellow-feeling it gives us with all created things! I bethink me, though you must not press my illustration too hard, of St. Paul and his company reaching shore, "some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship." Yes, "bread broken" is needed to bring us ashore when Christ ordains it. Poor suffering creation! It all groans, so says wonderful St. Paul; man pulled it all down with him. It awaits completed redemption with us. And the Lord, in instituting the Sacraments, gently draws us towards the body of the world. A voice seems to say: "Ye cannot be saved without other created things: why should ye wish it? Ye by sinning destroyed the full glory of creation. Glimpses ye get of what it again will be, guessed at by the thing ye call 'beauty' as it gleams and vanishes over hill and stream and distance. The gleams are but foretastes of the restitution of all things. Ye are the head of creation and were able to spoil creation. Yet ye also are part of things created." Can you understand? So I personally get greater reverence for the simple "means of grace," the material of them. I destroyed the ship by my wicked will: my Saviour has ordained that I am not to reach the

shore without pieces and planks of the ship. He, the Lord and Master, even calls them His body for spiritual use. My friend, I am getting out of my depth. I am tempted to ask questions which bewilder. I mean—The Incarnation! Does it mean only man's nature taken up? Is there some deeper truth yet hidden? Is all creation taken up? Pardon me, but the windows that open are so full of mystery. . . Spiritual props you asked about, and I have given you a heap, perhaps of undigested matter.' So we continued our walk, and for a time in silence.

XI

PROPS

(III)

'Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts.'—Ps. cxxxix. 23.

'Is any among you sick?—let him call for the elders of the Church.'—JAMES v. 14.

THE road homeward had brought us to where it dipped into the valley. There below lay the village with its church. The sun was setting, and over all nature that veil of beauty was spread of which we had spoken. Human habitations, pathways, woods and streams, all were clothed with that added mystery of atmosphere which appeals so much not only to the artist but to every receptive heart—a parable of life, of life hidden from each other, but pressed lovingly and gently by God.

'How grateful is the silence!' 'Yes,'

he answered ; ' what should we do without it—not only for the tired body, but for the spirit ? We feel—do we not ?—almost unwilling to descend and intrude down there.' So for a moment we paused ; then I spoke again. ' The scene leads me to ask one more question. Silence is so welcome to the soul ; and is it not Tennyson who says, somewhere, that Silence has a half-sister, " Reticence " ? So comes my question : What is your view of " Confession " in the Church ? It is a prop, but should it be common or rare ? ' We stood and gazed at the folds of hill and dale wrapped in evening haze. At length he answered. ' How difficult your questions become ! But don't misunderstand me. Personally I have no difficulty : it is when I look out over the varieties of human character that I am bewildered. Sometimes I think the decision on the question you raise must be largely a race problem—whole races differ about it. I believe Confession, as generally known in the Catholic Church, must be treated differently among different races. It seems to be a regular food for the Latin character. Certainly it is not for the English man or woman, judging by myself and by what I know of my race. For us it is a medicine, a powerful and precious remedy for the soul when reticence has to be broken down to get

peace, to unburden the soul of a weight it cannot bear unaided or in some supreme crisis or in the presence of death. It is indeed a precious medicine then. I hope I am not arrogating too much to my race when I say that it is accustomed to live alone. It is in consequence a great pioneer, not needing companionship as much as other races; and it is the same spiritually: personally I have no doubt of it. We have enthroned that "half-sister, Reticence"; she might almost be our patron saint. We expect each other to stand in God's presence without anyone overhearing. No race, I think, so prizes direct access to God in Christ as ours. None looks upon it so entirely as our birthright, and we shrink, down in the depths of the spirit, from interference and from the prying eye. "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded ——' But you know the words. They go straight home to our race. But I should like to go further. I find it very difficult to find anything in the O.T. or the N.T. which even recommends habitual recourse to any human being for direction, or for obtaining peace or assurance of forgiveness. One has to go to St. James, and to put a strained meaning upon his words to get such advice. I allude of course to "Is any sick among you?—let him call for the elders of the Church." He refers to bodily

sickness. You will say perhaps that in this characteristic the Jew and the Englishman are alike; it may be so.' There was a pause, a long one, then he continued: 'There is a Holy Place in man, nay, a Holy of Holies, where God meets man alone and whispers to him: the Master tells him there of a new name, which no one else knows. The English pastor as a rule conducts his pupil to the door and there stands hat in hand; and the pupil brought to intimacy with his Lord, enters alone. "Reticence" too stands without, finger on lip, guarding the door. That, I think, is the normal Englishman's course: it wouldn't do, I think, for the Latin: nor is it sufficient for many of our own people. And there my perplexity begins. It needs so much wisdom to hold the balance: in the first place to brace the character that it may play the man, to make it the rule to enter the Holy Place alone, to hold that as the ideal. But next, to be ready to help not the weak, but those who need human companionship, human direction, human assurance of pardon, and direct individual assurance more than a great many of us. It is as bad to discourage those who need such help as to weaken the character of our race by forcing companionship within the Holy Place.' Again, he was silent: and still we gazed into the mists of

the evening scene. Then once more: 'Nothing in the priest's work needs the experience that comes with age, experience of life, more than this. It is terrible to discover that an English man or woman has so much of the Latin in him or her that they look upon us as hard and unsympathetic or unable, or unwilling to help. But it is equally bad when we strive to break by our teaching the splendid gift of our race—its power of entering alone into the Holy Place to open the heart to God and to be satisfied.' We had not moved from our position and I had not asked all my questions. 'What is your own feeling when you are asked to accompany the man or woman into that Holy Place?' 'No doubt of that,' he answered; 'never so much as then does one feel one's own unworthiness. To stand by whilst a soul unclothes itself! It is the most awful of all priestly duties; essential at times, yes: but it bows the heart: and "Reticence" she bows her head. Yet I suppose to the Latin there is nothing in it, and for his race it is all in the day's work. Strange diversities indeed of human nature! And if anyone will survey the world of Christendom, I don't think he can help expressing gratitude for this English (or British) contribution to spiritual life. Surely it is a noble gift to honour Reticence: to

possess the medicine for the stricken soul, but to count it as medicine.' I assented. Then he added a word. 'Have you realised that in the Ordinal of the Anglican Church there is a unique question publicly put to every deacon and priest before Ordination and to every bishop before Consecration, "Do you think (are you persuaded) that you be truly called——?" There is nothing like it in any other Ordinal of the Ancient Catholic Church. I doubt whether it would be natural for any other part of the Church: but it is so completely natural to us that I believe it is one more quite unconscious proof of the special gift of our race. It means, I think, "Thou art accustomed to enter into the Holy Place alone, to commune with thy God: thou hast thine own secrets with thy Saviour and Lord: thou hast the Spirit within thee—what has the Lord said to thee in this matter? I must know that before I may proceed to call thee to this Ministry." Nothing could be more completely natural to us so to be dealt with. Nothing more unlikely or perhaps unnatural to the Latin temper. Once more, strange indeed are the diversities of human character, race by race!' The sun had set. I thanked my friend, and we took our way down the valley pondering.

XII

PASTORS OR PROPHETS

'He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.' —EPH. iv. 11.

WE had been discussing the National Mission, a laymen and I, and at length, of course, with reference to leaders and workers. My friend said, 'Whom do you think I pity most?' 'Pity?' I inquired. 'Yes, pity: I pity one class of workers as much as I envy another. The first is a huge number, the second a much more select band, but both indispensable. You see, I envy the prophets, and I pity the pastors': his eye twinkled. 'St. Paul knew all about the various types,' he continued: '"He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Don't you think also that those are all types found in every

vocation; in the Navy and Army, in the Government, even in business? In this National Mission what a field there has been for the prophet! He has had the time of his life: quite right too; nothing could have been done without him. The note had to be struck and he threw his whole strength into it: everyone has heard it.' 'It is fairly obvious,' I answered, 'what the *rôle* of the prophet is, but I should like you to define it.' 'Well, of course,' he replied, 'the prophet is first a seer, standing on a hill top, dwelling on a distant horizon, catching the gleams on the hills. Then he is a diagnoser of the maladies of life, detecting personal sins, and most of all the corporate failures of society, of nations, of continents. He threatens judgment and points to God and His Will. Every nation has had them, in Church and State.' He paused; then he said, 'It must be a fine thing to be a prophet, even though they are the first to be murdered. His besetting sin must be pride, I think: I don't know from personal experience, but it must be an uplifting thing for a man or woman, to be capable of large views and keen sight and great visions of good and evil.'

We pondered; then I intruded again. 'I think I am more than ever anxious to hear you define the pastor, the person whom you pity.

'I pity you pastors,' he answered, 'especially in such days as these; the rank and file who have to carry into practice the ideals of the man up there upon the hill. I have been collecting illustrations and you shall have them. The castle in the air, for example: what a glorious fabric of ideas, at present resting on nothing material: a new city of God portrayed by the prophet. Then the seer calls up the pastor, if it refers to the moral and spiritual life especially, and says, "Go and put in the foundations of that building"; or again the ringing voice cries, "Don't stay in the stagnant valley; bestir yourselves; up and away to yonder hills where the breeze blows healthfully." And the pastor proceeds to cut the road. It has first to be surveyed, then made through thick jungle, quagmires, and many novel obstacles. Stones and rocks intervene, but the pastor must get through while the prophet notes every error and all the delays, and proclaims the fact to all men. Once more; look at that coach on that very ill-made road. The horses are having a bad time of it: they slip and slide and occasionally fall. The coachman is not very good-tempered and uses the whip pretty freely. I think I have caught him asleep once or twice, but that doesn't prevent him lashing the horses when they begin to dream a bit. I pity the

horses: I have a fellow-feeling for those who have to put in the foundations to the castles in the air, and make those dreadful roads to the distant hills and drag that heavy coach. There I think you have the pastors. And they are the mass of the workers in every profession. Do you remember Phillips Brooks' sermon on "the man with two talents"? It was splendid of him, for he was a prophet if ever there was one, and he loved the average man.' 'Thank you,' I said, 'thank you for saying a good word for us pastors. How many prophets are there in England? Not many, I suppose: then think of us twenty thousand pastors, average men, navvies of the Lord: we cannot travel, we are most of us very poor; we live in valleys, jungles, and morasses, in all types of places, and if we haven't learnt to ejaculate, "Blessed be drudgery," woe be to us.' My friend assented. 'Yes, and,' he continued, 'I have just the same feeling with regard to the Ministers of the Crown and the Commanders in the Navy and Army, and, above all, for those who have had those novel duties of food controlling, munition making, and those who have to guard morals in these abnormal times. I am glad there are critics on the tops of all the hills, good luck to them, but my heart is with the workers who have to face all the practical difficulties. With-

in, in the Church, I place them in the category of the pastors. But this is a lay sermon, my friend. It is your turn now ; throw some light upon the subject out of your own stores.' I said nothing for awhile, and then something came to me and I put it thus : ' Yes, the great forerunner of the Lord was a typical prophet : John was a solitary ; his dress showed it, his food too, and probably his tones and manners. No one had a more piercing eye for the sins of his time, personal and corporate, and he spared none. They murdered him of course, but the prophet had done his work. Then—ah ! then the Lord chose twelve—twelve prophets ? No : twelve pastors. He taught them to be His labourers, husbandmen, witnesses. They had to dig the foundations : they were often puzzled, but the Pentecostal Gift carried them through. They no doubt disagreed among themselves : probably some thought the others slow ; and the others considered some too idealistic and not practical. I imagine, if we knew fully the life and character of those twelve, they would be a picture of twelve sorts of pastors perfectly familiar to us to-day within the Church. Then —then a change : another was chosen ; one of the most remarkable men that history tells of. He was prophet and pastor, evangelist and teacher, seer and builder. Yes, it certainly is

remarkable that the Master was ushered in by a prophet and chose twelve pastors. Then His voice called one who was all that John the Baptist and the twelve were. However, I only wish to take one step. One prophet, then twelve pastors, ushered in the New Dispensation : and with you I salute, I raise my hat to, the thousands of humble pastors of to-day, at home, abroad, everywhere—the vast and generally silent masses of the average men and women, the possessors of two talents, the diggers and delvers, the multitude that is seldom, if ever, " mentioned in despatches." '

And my friend showed his approval by stretching out his hand and I grasped it. We sympathised mutually with the pastors of to-day.

XIII

REINCARNATION

'I press on.'—PHIL. iii. 12.

'I BELIEVE in reincarnations. I see nothing for it but to return to the earth after death and reincarnate, and so work out one's salvation.' 'So that,' I answered, 'is your gospel tidings for mankind? Do you consider it good news?' 'I don't know about that,' he answered, 'but it seems to me the natural thing. Mankind has made a very poor job of it up to this—why should we not have another chance?' I replied, 'I suppose you know that your theory of life (at least your present theory—I don't think you will keep it long) is the solution of life's problem among millions of Orientals. But also almost equally universally they hold that life is a dreadful thing, a horror: the great hope is to be rid of

it at length, to lose personality, to be engulfed in the end in some impersonal spirit ; some call it Nirvana. Those millions do not call it a Gospel ; all over life, in the future as in the past, there hangs a veil for them of mysterious sadness. Those acute intellects, ever brooding over the mysteries of the world and all life, have carved out these imaginings, not because they love them, but because they see no happier lot for mankind. There is no hope in it ; resignation, calm and sad of hue, takes its place.' I ceased and he protested : ' Is it really as bad as that ? ' ' Well,' I answered, ' follow the course of the thoughts of an Indian philosopher deeply imbued with those views. I will honestly put his musings into words : " How many existences have I already passed through ? I have no memory of them. None of the lessons of experience survive. I may have been a cow, a flea, a tiger. I may have walked this earth as a woman, as a bad and wicked man, as a fairly good man. I may have lived ten thousand lives, of an insect, a reptile, a man or woman ; but having been defiled each time I have been thrown back to try once more. But I have no more help now than I had a million years ago. Consequently, I do not know that I have any more chance of winning the prize of passing into the ocean of life than I had a million years back. The weary round goes on. The

most hateful thing of all is such life." I don't think I have unfairly put the case. The main factors in the problem seem to be these :—Man has to win salvation by his own unaided efforts. In one of these existences he must live pure and undefiled ; he has never succeeded in this ; he has no more power now than he ever had. Memory of all past existences is not given him. He can only imagine the past. On any doctrine of chances, therefore, it is a hopeless task in his present existence. He is caught in a chain which only lengthens, but grows no weaker. No hand from above is held out. The great impersonal being awaits his coming, but almost certainly in vain, and life on earth is a horror. He rolls a stone up a hill and it falls back always. I will tell you what this theory of life reminds me of : it recalls one of the very sad memories of childhood, as lived in early Victorian days ; perhaps you live in more fortunate times. It gives me a pang as I recall the picture of a child of nine, years ago, sitting by himself at a table in an empty schoolroom. Outside, through the windows, are wafted to him the voices of his companions at play, but he remains behind with tears on his cheeks, a slate pencil in his hand, and a slate before him smeared with marks of his fingers. He must do his sum right, without help ; he has been told that he is a naughty, disobedient child ; he

knows how to do the sum, but he won't do it. But he doesn't know, and he is hopeless; he will have to sit there all the afternoon; perhaps he will be sent to bed with only a bit of bread, a naughty, wilful child. But he is not that: he is simply unable to understand and they won't help him, and bitter, bitter and hopeless is life. That experience reminds me of your doctrine of reincarnation, in order to win life, without help, without memory from the past existences. To me, as a Christian, it is hell. But though this memory gives one "a sore heart," your doctrine is worse still. It is as though the mistress had gone up to that child even before he had been given that sum and said "You naughty, wicked child, I am going to whip you hard. Do you know why? Your mother, your grandfather and great grandfather, all committed many faults, though you yourself know nothing about them, and I am going to punish you very severely for their mistakes. It is because of their faults that you are here." There you have two horrors. Combined, they seem to me to justify my view, that your gospel is my hell.'

I was silent, so was he. Then I continued: 'You are younger than I. Youth, full of audacity, holds theories lightly which older men shudder at, because these know so much more of sins, weakness, failure. So, too, they thank

God for a revelation, for a Gospel which is a real Gospel and therefore meant for sinners. I don't believe in arguing a man, so to speak, out of the room. I only ask you to consider what I say, to think the subject over, and in due time to realise what the Christian Gospel means. Just take the following points into consideration : I won't labour them. If you want to see the subject handled clearly and briefly, read the letters of the late H. H. Jeaffreson.

'The theory of reincarnation is mere assumption. There is no proof of it. To be of value you must suppose that a continued memory of past existences accompanies a man, so that he may have a better chance each time. There is no such memory. Our experience is all the other way. In spiritual things we all seem to begin at the same place and end in the same place. We all enter the same school in the lowest class and pass on to one or other of the higher classes. This earthly school, according to the Gospel of Christ, leads on to another school. We leave the earth behind, and our mortal vesture upon it. Christ has gone before to prepare a place for us, not on the earth, but elsewhere, with a spirit body in a sphere as yet faintly discerned ; we call it "in Christ." The theory of reincarnations seems to presuppose an eternal earth. All knowledge is against this. This earth is to pass away as an abode

of mortal life. Whether other worlds with other life will continue to exist we know not ; all we are assured of is that Christ is drawing us up from earth to heaven ; from the school of earth to, if you like, the school of heaven. But almost certainly we use the word " school " in different senses in that sentence ; that is, quite vaguely. Education in Christ's school does not go back, but forward. All along we have help. We are not left alone to work out our sum. " Lord, help me," " Lord, save me," these are the prayers that are never unheeded. The answer comes, " It is I, be not afraid." " Be of good cheer." " Come unto me." We have come far, haven't we, from the doctrine of reincarnations ? So far as we know, we have never lived before. But, having begun, we " press on." We don't return here. We don't look back ; Faith, Hope, Love abide and look forward. We press on. And this is indeed a Gospel. You may not believe it ; you may say it is too good to be true. But this is what in our brightest dreams is the best news. And it is the very Gospel which is covering the earth, slowly, very slowly, still it passes on. Now don't answer anything. Think it over.' So he and I parted, and I at least hoped that we should meet again.

XIV

THE GOOD CENTURION

'A certain centurion.'—LUKE vii. 2.

THE Dispersion had carried bands of the brethren far and wide. Spain, Gaul, even the shores of Britain were touched by the followers of 'the Way.' Forty years had passed since the Master had ascended; and I have now a tale to tell of a little band who had settled in northern Gaul. Banishment it seemed to them, so few were like-minded there. Then one day an event occurred which turned the brethren's gloom into rejoicing, and they reckoned themselves blessed in that they were led by the mercy and goodness of God to this remote region. One of them sent a letter to a disciple on the Lake of Tiberias.

'Thou knowest how sadly we wrote unto thee, good friend, and thy kind heart was

surely filled with compassion for us exiles. Shame on us for our lack of faith : forgive us, too, for the gloom which we may have shed over thee, for thou wert ever solicitous for others' welfare. Whilst we were sad the Lord was preparing for us a joy indeed, so deep, so full, that we reckon it the richest blessing of the Way. But thou wilt be impatient to learn the news. 'Twas a week ago ; how long it seemeth, for the days have been so full since that ever to be remembered Lord's day. We had been worshipping upon the shore, we had sung our hymns and prayed, and now we were returning, when we were accosted by an aged man, a stranger to us. Evidently he was a Roman, high born, and of the military order by his bearing, though now well on in years. Courteously, with an apology indeed, he asked us of our ways. Were we Jews ? He thought so from what he had heard of our worship, yet it seemed to differ somewhat. We told him of our Faith. Then it was that the stranger seemed strangely moved. "Do I hear," he inquired, "that you follow one Jesus ? " "Yea," we answered, "our Lord and our God." He looked upon us and I caught some words such as these : "Then at length I may have news : can it be after so many years of waiting ? Friends," he said, "if I may

call you so without introduction, have you a moment or two? Will you sit while we discourse? I have to ask you for tidings of that for which I have longed these many years." Gladly we seated ourselves. The air was warm, the sea lay still and calm, and far across the waves there gleamed white cliffs low upon the horizon. We had often gazed upon them, upon the isle of the Britons. The stranger too looked that way, and as we watched him the same thought occurred to us all—"A noble Roman this: what dignity and gravity, a religious man, doubtless of the Stoic philosophy."

'"I have but just returned," he said at length, "from that land across the sea. For years I have been Tribune of the Legion, with scanty news from Italy, none from a region which your words have recalled. I pray you enlighten me. You know Syria?" "Aye, indeed, we have but lately left it, drifting hither after many vicissitudes." "And you know the Lake of Galilee?" "'Tis fast by our home," I answered. "Nay, then," he replied, "praise be to the gods. At length I shall obtain tidings. How I have longed for some like you! It must be, it surely must be he whom you follow who once granted me a boon for which I have yearly given thanks to the gods as a certain day returns." At this, my friend, my heart

leaped within me. Could it be, I asked, could this be the Centurion? His face, his bearing, pointed that way: a man worthy of praise to all appearance. But I said naught, waiting for his words. "I saw the Prophet thrice," he said; "nigh forty years ago. I was with the Legion in Capernaum. Men spoke of him as a healer, as one who spoke as the ancient prophets, with authority. One day, by the lake shore, I saw him. He was standing with some followers watching the toll-keepers. One at least of these seemed acquainted with him, for he half rose from his seat to salute him, but the Prophet beckoned to him to be still; and it was done so graciously, nay, so sweetly, that it touched a chord in my own heart. At length the Prophet went forward; no one checked him: there was that about him, so it seemed to me, that made you give place to him gladly. He went to the publican and smiled upon him and whispered in his ear. And oh! the look of gladness which came upon the official's face. The publican rose; he spoke to his fellows, giving some orders; then he seemed to touch the Prophet's cloak tenderly and straight away he followed him, and that little company passed from my sight. But the scene took hold of me. 'Surely this is a man indeed,' my heart said. A second time I beheld him as the shades

of evening drew on. He looked weary; round him pressed all the afflicted in Capernaum, so great seemed their number. Sighs, callings, groans, sounded on all sides. He touched them, he spoke to one or another, and virtue seemed to distil from him: but ever, so it seemed to me, he appeared to grow more and more weary; he seemed to be giving his very life for others. Would he sink exhausted, I asked myself? But he endured. One thing, too, I noted. He could never pass a mother with a sick child."

'All the while we brethren listened, breathless, to this Roman. Here was one who had seen the Lord, and we—we had not. "Pray proceed, sir," I said, "you know not how wonderful, how acceptable is your tale to us." At length he proceeded: "I had a servant." Then we knew! Then this indeed was he of whom the writing told. And now we hung upon his words. "I had a servant, dearly loved; he had saved my life in illness; no words could tell of his faithful care of me when sick of a distressing complaint; long weeks he nursed me. And I freed him; but he would make no difference: he was still my bond-servant: service, he would say, was the noblest life, echoing our best philosophers though few followed them so far. And now on that day

my more than servant lay dying. Hour by hour I sat beside him, for I would requite what he had done for me, though often he would motion me away, protesting. So it was that I thought of the Prophet. Would he come? I thought he would: yet could I not leave that bedside. Would the Healer come if I sent but a message? I hoped he would; I sent friends: and indeed some of your people also went to intercede with him. Meanwhile I sat at home hoping and fearing. Peradventure he was away upon a journey. Then—never can the memory of that hour pass from me—then, of a sudden, the patient opened his eyes and said with a clear voice 'Who touched me?' I bent down and said 'No one,' thinking he wandered. 'Yea,' he said again, 'someone touched me. Didst not thou hear the voice too? It said clearly, "Be healed."' 'Nay,' I answered, 'there hath been no voice.' Upon that, to my amazement, he sat up. 'Master,' he said, 'I am healed. I know no more, but I am healed.' I begged him to lie down again for fear his strength might fail, and in an amaze I waited. After awhile steps drew near and my friends returned to tell me a wondrous tale. The Healer sent a message. He had not come, he could not then, but all would be well. I sent thanks to him, but he could not be found;

he had gone away on some errand of mercy. Heard ye ever so wondrous a tale?" Then indeed I in my turn smiled upon him and cried "Nay, noble Roman, thy tale is well known to me already." "Known to thee?" he cried. "How so?" And from my bosom I drew those sacred writings, sayings of the Master, which we had carefully kept with us as the very words of life. "Listen," I said, and I read him the story. And when I came to the words of the Lord when He praised the Roman's faith, then I rose up, we all rose up, and I said, "We salute him whom the Lord hath praised: we thank God that He hath led us even to the ends of the world that we might greet one so highly favoured." The Tribune bowed his head, and I know not but that a tear fell from his eyes though he strove to conceal it: he raised his head and murmured, saying, "The Prophet praised me! Is it possible that he praised me?"

'All eagerly I then again addressed him. "But, sir, did you not in due time speak with Him who is our Lord?" "Nay," he answered, "I never did. But I saw him once again. A few days after this event, as I marched with my cohort through the street, I espied him with his followers. I noted how he stood aside, making way for us, and how he looked

tenderly at the soldiers. And when I came opposite to him he inclined his head and it seemed to me that he gave me greeting. Yea, and it took all the habit of my military art to restrain me from breaking away and kneeling at his feet. I think, too, he understood. I passed on and I never saw him more, for upon the next day we had received orders to move our quarters. Shortly after also we left that land, and now for years I have dwelt in yonder savage isle. So ye have my story: but I bless this day; praise to the gods for news of the Prophet! "And thy servant," I cried, "liveth he yet?" "Aye, indeed," he answered, "but infirm; he hath not long to live. Come, see him now, this very day. He too would gladly hear your news." So we accompanied the Roman to his home; yea, and we beheld the servant, a wasted figure, and evidently soon to pass the veil. And when he had heard our news he grasped my hand and said, "I am the very man that felt the touch and heard the voice; and I have heard and felt them again through these years in dreams, yet were they more than dreams to me."

'What shall I say of the days that have followed? Full of thanksgiving they have been, for these two are seekers. Nay, they are souls naturally Christian, and the servant

seeth the light even more clearly than the master. What wonder indeed, since he hath in him the virtue from the Lord? One sentence will I give thee of the Tribune's discourse but yesterday ere I conclude this letter.

'"I have read much of your ancient history," he said, "and to-day it seemeth that in my Roman religion I have ever followed the pillar of cloud and of fire. It standeth for duty, grand and stern, but cold also and hard. And now ye have brought me a Face. Out of the fiery pillar it cometh, and it is the face of the Prophet." We do not doubt what course these two will run shortly, and we daily, hourly thank God, Who thus has blessed us. Farewell.'

XV

RELIGIOUS INTENSITY

'When Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned.'—GAL. ii. 11.

I HAD been reading a book of travels and paused over a sentence which pained, though it was no unusual sentiment in my experience. It contained a sneer. 'Mohammedans rival Christians in their hatred of each other when they differ on religious matters.' Was the writer a Christian? Yes, but one of those who seem to consider it ridiculous to be in desperate earnest over any religious matter. I turned to my friend and read the words, and asked: 'Do you feel the sting?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'the whole subject, too, is difficult. I should like to clear my mind by talking, and, to start with, how much of the sting would pass if the writer had added words such as

these : " At bottom the reason is that, however much Christians and Moslems differ, they agree in this, that both believe in a revelation from God." That, of course, is the reason why we Christians are, as you have said, in such desperate earnest when that revelation is impugned or attacked. We have a deposit, more precious than aught else in the world ; it is our treasure, and our hearts are bound up with it. In the first days Christians were faced with a duty quite overwhelming in its responsibility. The Church had fairly settled the question of the Canon of Scripture ; the words of the Lord, which were ever to be remembered, were fixed, and the permanent commentaries also upon their meaning—the Life as well as the Words of course. So far it was a work which might be called " cleansing." Out of the mass of writings the gold was extracted and stamped as coin for use.

' Then followed the " defending." Questions, some earnest and others scoffing, fell like rain upon the Church. Every difficulty that could occur to the mind of man in respect of a revelation from God and of the Only Begotten Son, and of the Spirit, was wrapped up in those demands made of the Church in the first four or five centuries. The more I read of them the more I feel that there are really no

new questions to be asked. And the Church did defend its deposit. The battle was sore upon it. Trenches, so to speak, were lost and gained. Treachery found a place within, ignorance was still more common; the sympathies of others who longed to embrace every possible form of belief probably afforded more perplexity than anything else, as has been true probably of every age, and not least of our own. And now the treasure of revealed truth is in our possession, to be handed on. Those of us who, however imperfectly, have found that deposit the pearl of great price, who have been prepared at least to sell all and buy it, we cannot help having passionate feelings if we consider that any are trying to steal from us any part of that treasure in order to destroy it. You see, it is not merely a question of abstract truth, there is much more than that in it. There is a Person revealed, who has won our hearts, to whom we have given lifelong allegiance, devotion, love. To be ashamed of Him or of His words means to us death. Then, if someone assails His character or denies His words or cavils at His unique authority, what do men expect of us? Yes, we are in this business in desperate earnest! The matter in question may seem a small one to an outsider; let us say to a philosopher, who

watches as an interesting study the faiths and religions of people. But you and I cannot speak of our faith being interesting, any more than we could speak of the day of judgment as a very interesting episode. Life and death for us, light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hate, these are in the case, according to our poor lights.'

'Thank you,' I answered, 'thank you indeed. Obviously it is impossible for a devout Christian not to have deep convictions. Of course he is capable at times of fervent indignation and strong action too. I wonder, for example, what a philosopher, a student of comparative religions, who himself sat lightly to any belief, would have thought if he could have watched the Lord cleansing the Temple. Would he have risen superior to such an act? Was it worth it? Actual physical violence, destruction of property too, and all because men were a few yards too near a holy place.'

'I agree,' said my friend, 'and I should like to make a further suggestion. I have wondered how exactly the Lord looked, how He really spoke, in what tones, when John and James came storming back from that Samaritan village demanding fire upon people who had been unkind to their beloved Master. The record is so short—"He turned and

rebuked them." But how did He rebuke? My own belief is that it was done very tenderly. Of course they, brought up on the Old Testament, did not yet understand how He came, but no man will make me believe that He was harsh towards His own who were burning with love and loyalty to Him. I wonder, also, what your broad-minded philosopher would have said had he been present when St. Paul resisted St. Peter to his face. What? Quarrelling over an old custom! unworthy of an educated man; keep your wrath for a better season! But no, here was a parting of the ways, just as in the fourth century scoffers said that Christians were tearing each other in pieces over a vowel in the Creed. I suppose those who believe nothing in particular have certain advantages over those to whom their beliefs are their life, more especially when it is a trust accepted and to be handed on intact. But to have "known in whom we have believed," to have accepted a revelation from God, to have known the Father in His Son, to have accepted the Spirit as the Holy Ghost—we envy no one their beliefs or non-beliefs. We are "satisfied." We have in these last days seen our best die in tens of thousands from loyalty to King, to the cause of God, as honour and justice; in the same way

we are ready to stand up for the preservation of the Truth. At times we may be led into anger, unworthy anger, and unseemliness, but it is because we love One Who has spoken to us, and has given us a commandment and a lifelong duty. We wish we could be wholly loyal and true without being unseemly. But I believe that the real reproach against us is too often that we care so much and believe so fervently, that we make a *personal* matter of an attack on what we conceive to be our Master's cause, or an impugnment of His revelation to us. Let us keep out the personal element.' My companion was panting from the energy of his language, and I thanked God for it. Here at least was one who believed with heart, soul, and mind.

XVI

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

'Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.'—MARK iii. 29.

A YOUNG friend had written on the theme of 'the unpardonable sin.' I believe the cause was the War, which has forced so many grave thoughts upon this generation. The War, its inception by the enemy, his lies and broken covenants, his brutalities and calculated atrocities, and all after long preparation—no wonder we turn to such words as the above. The answer was as follows: 'I am not surprised, my dear fellow, at the direction of your thoughts. We seem to have drawn nearer to "The Last Things"—Death and Judgment, Hell and Heaven. And so those words of the Lord strike on our hearts. How do they come

to our individual selves? Like writing on the wall for all of us? Terrible they are because they seem so contrary to the Good Tidings which tell of pardon, universal, free and full. "If any man sin we have an advocate," says the Apostle who saw most deeply into The Last Things. But the Lord, who promised us "another Comforter," tells of blasphemy against Him that "hath never forgiveness" and as He beheld men who called good evil. And now, what do you think? Has anyone ever actually committed that sin? No one can tell. Had those scribes from Jerusalem? In serious danger of it they certainly were. And I am bound to say that as age comes on we are more than ever ready to put away proud thoughts as to our own immunity. I mean, have there not been thousands of Judases? Is there really much difference between the sins of masses of us if our very different conditions of life are taken into full account? Has it been anything but a sheltered life and enormously greater spiritual help which has saved many of us from the worst falls? Not we, but the grace of God. You see why I have written thus: we cannot any of us approach the subject you propose, in the Pharisaic spirit. But as to interpretation, my own way is not to trust too much to my own

thoughts on these profound problems. I would rather sit at the feet of the wisest and sanest men of God. Do you know, for example, what Dr. Swete has written on this very verse? I put down a few of his sentences. "There is one exception to the 'authority' of the Son of Man in the forgiveness of sins." "To identify the source of good with the impersonation of evil implies a moral disease for which the Incarnation itself provides no remedy." This sin "belongs to the sphere of the world to come." "The man is in the grasp of a sin which will not let him go without a divine remission, and to this sin, since it belongs to the eternal order, the power exercised by the Son of Man on earth does not apply." Then also the words of two other great men of God; you will note that they all three lead us in the same direction. Bengel says, on the verse in question, "Such a sin is not human but Satanic." Once more, you know the words in Heb. vi. 6: "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance," says Bishop Westcott in comment: "No human agency can help." "It is impossible for men to renew to repentance those who have fallen from the Faith." "The change in such a case would not be a new birth but a raising from the dead."

'Now let me put such thoughts for you into my own language. There can be no forgiveness without repentance, without a broken and a contrite heart, without turning to God after sin "with weeping, fasting, and mourning." But suppose a heart so hardened that it cannot repent, cannot win a broken heart, and cannot mourn for sin committed? Suppose, further, that it hates all good and loves all evil, what then? The Lord says—and they are, I suppose, the most awful of His recorded words—that the case of that man is beyond the Dispensation of the Incarnation. What then? Silence falls: there is a true Christian agnosticism which confesses that it can say nothing: it does not dogmatise, it lays its hand upon its mouth. There is the Day of the Son of Man, and there is—what lies beyond, the eternal order: it is possible for man to become outside the Day of the Son of Man and His "authority." And then—well, I see that somewhere St. Bernard said that "the two feet of God are Mercy and Judgment." And there we pause. Now, do you care for analogies? Some do not: I find them infinitely helpful, and the feeling grows in me that nature and human life have parables of all Divine truths if we had vision sufficient to read them. Observe our own laws: there are crimes so heinous that they are lifted clear out

of the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts and must be sent to far higher tribunals. So in the ecclesiastical sphere and in the things of the Spirit: you doubtless know that there are sins confessed by a priest to a priest which cannot be dealt with by the priest: they are beyond him, he cannot advise on them or himself minister absolution: the case has to be referred to the bishop. Or let it be a parable of nature. Suppose that you were surveying on some summer evening a wide prospect of woods and fields, of villages and country houses, in some lovely valley watered by a noble river, rejoicing at all the signs of life and peace. And suppose the friend with you were an astronomer and showed you an hour later the moon, and explained to you the lifeless orb, lifeless as we know life, no atmosphere there, nothing to temper the deadly fire of the sun or the horror of the cold, and then say to you: "That is what an earth like ours can become." I think if I put my three analogies together I understand in some degree how men of God who have devoted their lives to the Scriptures have tried to explain that saying of the Lord. It is just a peep at what man may become. When good becomes evil and evil becomes good, then man has left the region of the human for the region of the devil. "It implies a moral disease for

which the Incarnation itself provides no remedy." Again I ask, has anyone ever actually come to this state, any human being? We have no right to answer about that of which we know nothing. And you, my friend, I do not think you are enamoured of that frame of mind which demands a categorical answer to every conceivable question. I think you are like myself in being unfeignedly glad to confess ignorance, to rejoice in it, to go as far as you can see and to refuse to go any further. In these days many are tempted to say that a personage, or a group of personages, having been causes, as we believe, of the most appalling horrors to millions, must have become guilty of something like the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and are in danger of "an eternal sin." Let us leave judgment to God, whilst the last word must be for ourselves, must it not? Let us ever pray that we may never lose the will and the power to repent, to keep the heart broken, to make forgiveness possible; to keep ourselves within the "authority" of the Son of Man to forgive sins, the Incarnation our ground of hope and our remedy. All good be with you, and knowledge of things spiritual be yours in fuller degree for your own sake and the world's.'

XVII

TRAINING FOR LIFE WORK

'Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?'—MARK iv. 40.

A HEADMASTER to his boys, after the match:

'A great many of you take it for granted that a headmaster ought to have a keen interest in games. Some may think it one of his redeeming features. But it may surprise many more that in these days of war, when our dead schoolfellows and heroes might perhaps fill this chapel from end to end, I should take cricket as the subject for a sermon. I let you into a secret. I am not sure whether I do not owe as much to cricket as to any other thing as a preparation for what we call the battle of life. I am not ashamed to call it, in my own life, a means of grace: therefore it becomes a solemn subject. Moreover, it

was at the time one of the unconscious influences; that is, it appeared to be a pastime and became an education. Whenever I hear the advice to "play the game," I on my part think at once of cricket. And when I know that highly intellectual and thoughtful men have seemed to give their lives to instructing successive generations of boys on the cricket field, I recognise their lofty aims; they wished to pass on to their schoolfellows the secret of a well-spent life.

'Consider then: there is no game that takes so long to play, three full days, in some lands four or five, and if rightly played it means extreme tension all the time, in the field and out of it too, watching and noting. Moreover, there is none that can be played by so many different types; that is, it does not depend upon size or mere physical strength: none certainly which is so hourly influenced by incalculable weather changes, and therefore none in which hope may abide right up to the last half-hour of three long days. Nor do I believe there is any game that imposes in a subtle manner so severe and prolonged a moral strain, whilst also it affords room for more temptations to slackness and selfishness without immediate discovery. It is, in fact, a campaign, and a wonderfully apt parable

of war, and generally, of life's battle. So, as we of an older generation watch you in your turn playing this game, not forgetting our own failures, we ask at the beginning of a great match, can they keep *moral* throughout three long hot summer days? Can they keep it in spite of a very bad beginning? It is a tremendous test. To lose the toss, then to be kept in the field the whole long day and unexpectedly to see your best bowler unaccountably off his day, and to see catches dropped. When the strain begins to tell, to see some of the field becoming languid and slack—can you keep your own *moral*, and refrain from anger against others and be cheery? It is, I say, a great test, and the outcome of it perhaps a bright page in the history of the Empire. Then the second day: the first wicket falling in the first over, no runs on the board. And when your turn comes, are you really bowled before you go in, or does some fibre within you tighten, and nerve become steady for that first over from that new and undiscovered bowler? Then the baffling quantity: twice the weather changes, and the game swings rapidly from one side to the other, and then back again. So at length comes the third day: and the side which has kept *moral* wins in the last quarter of an hour. Part, too, of that *moral* is the

lesson learnt that no mean advantage shall be taken of the opponents, no appeal made when you know there is no cause for it, for this is a game between honourable English gentlemen, and more, much more depends upon it than the addition of one more victory on the pages of the school annals. The elders look on and bless God that by such means the character of the good soldier of Jesus Christ is fashioned, and all the more easily fashioned because the means are veiled except for the few. When some day some of you are pointed out as those who in difficult days were steadily courageous and stood unmoved whilst others blenched or attacked their schoolfellows or weakly feared, will the source of your own strength under God have been a game such as this, or what ?

'I make no apology for turning now from such education to another school. The scene is a boat ; it is filled by twelve scholars and one Master. The method of the Master is to have these scholars about him by night and by day that they may watch him and so learn. I have no doubt that both demeanour and pose towards all events and things were as important as words of instruction for this purpose. He was always, as it were, upon the mountain-top, in full view of them, and the more they gazed at every action, gesture, and habit, the

more they learnt : from silence as well as from speeches : from anger as from gentleness. Every moment by night and day was essential in order that through them might come to the world, to its utmost limits of clime and race, the spirit of Christ in all its power. And now we may ask how far had they come in their lessons on the day of which I speak ? If any of them had become ill I think they would have trusted in the Physician who had worked cures time and again in their presence. But physical dangers upon the sea, this was another matter, and they lost *moral*. Then spoke the Master : "Why are ye fearful ? Have ye not yet faith ?" No, not yet ; but this trust had also to be learnt so that it might be taught to us all. A few weeks later the lesson of the power of the Lord over all nature, as on this occasion, was wondrously repeated, for they saw Him walking calmly up hill and down dale, as it were, over the waves and down in the troughs, till He climbed up from such a journey into the boat. Let us turn from that scene. Ere long we may, either here or elsewhere, be confronted with the sudden danger from bombs in our homes, or some new peril to life. What will be the nature of our *moral* ? Does your Lord sleep ? Are you afraid or are you unmoved ? All

games, all other lessons learnt here should have taught each generation of us to keep our *moral*, which means, I suppose, steadfast courage; to look without flinching upon calamity and defeat, and danger: it expects hard times and tight places, and it trusts. We all know that it was one of the most conspicuous of the Roman virtues, sung by the poet, dwelt upon by the orator. But we Christians ought to surpass the Romans: for look you, the New Testament gives us a new conception of the nature of fear: for the Christian it makes it a sin, and for an obvious reason a Christian is in closest manner, inseparably I should like to say, united to his Lord; not only with Him, but in Him. And to be both "with Him" and "in Him," and at the same time to lack trust—that is not merely a weakness, it is sin. I think the New Testament view of the matter braces us all up; it makes the preservation of our *moral* a more sacred thing than ever. The quality is, you note, best expressed by a French word, and we thank our neighbours and now our most revered allies for recompensing to us in that way our gifts to them of some words they in turn do not possess. But the thing itself, that we know; and perhaps no race in the world learns it through games so fully as the British people. There is no short cut,

thank God, to the possession of it: discipline of years gives it, so our Lord has taught us in His "training of the twelve." And in our school no gift we can give our scholars is more precious than that possession which should become part of the character of the Christian gentleman, what our great game teaches alongside all we learn in chapel and school. Let me sum it up in the words of the Master as He climbed into the boat from off the waves, and in Wyclif's version: "I am, nyle ye drede."'

XVIII

FULNESS OF THE TIME

'When the fulness of the time came.'—GAL. iv. 4.

'Do you think, sir, that if the Lord had become Incarnate in our time His signs would have had as much force with us as they had of old?' The pupil was addressing the teacher.

T. 'It is an old perplexity, but my own view is clear; that is, if I give it by another question. Are you not supposing that had He come in some other age He would have manifested Himself in the same manner? We know nothing, but at least we can go as far as to say that when He came in the fulness of the time, His Revelation was exactly what was right in all its completeness and bafflingness for that fulness of time; at one moment we long for more light, at the next we are blinded by the flash.'

P. 'Then do you think, sir, there could have been any other "fulness of the time"? Was there but just the one and only one fit age for His coming as man?'

T. 'There can be no confident answer, but as a humble believer in Scripture I accept the simple statement: *that* was "the fulness of the time"; there was none before it, nor has there been any since. So clearly have His people seen this that all their measurement of time is based on that central point. I venture to prophesy that all attempts to change time measurement will collapse.'

P. 'Yes, sir, but suppose, just suppose, that He had come at the beginning of this century, how would He have come?'

The teacher laughed. T. 'Do you mean the beginning of the twentieth century?'

P. 'Yes.'

The teacher laughed again. T. 'That means that you ask, If the Lord had become Incarnate in the twentieth century of the Christian era——'! It was now the pupil's turn to laugh.

P. 'Yes, I see the absurdity, I had not thought of it.'

T. 'You note, my friend, that you open up an analogous question which has often come to me, namely, "If Christ had not come yet into the world's life, what would the world be like?"

Again are we completely baffled. It is like asking what the world would be like without the centre of gravity. Let us ask questions! Only a few out of all that might be asked occur to me, but they are enough to bewilder us. Nor need we begin with the wholly spiritual. For example, what would our scientific knowledge have been to-day without Him? The stimulus of discovery is from Him: I suppose no one doubts that. So, of course, in Art. No Christian architecture, or painting, or poetry! Eliminate even all this from the last two thousand years: I cannot conceive where our mere civilisation would be to-day. But there are even deeper questions. What would be the position of women to-day without Christ's coming two thousand years ago? Or go back further still: Can you imagine prophecy reviving again after it had died away? Or again, what position would Fear hold in religion without the trumpet-note telling of God our Father? And, based on that note of the trumpet, and on it alone, where would the state of Brotherhood in man be to-day? Take all that out. Shall I go on? Yes? Very well: Every one knows the list of pre-Christian virtues—Justice, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude. Very fine, but hard. Somehow you feel inclined to murmur: where

is Benevolence? And can you imagine eliminating out of the world's consciousness the Christian virtues--Faith, Hope, Love? What really would have happened to the world if you took away the Personal Revelation of God and the gift of Pentecost? I suppose there is nothing which has crushed "Self" in man so much as his belief, since Christ came, that he can lose himself "in Christ." Think again: no Beatitudes: eliminate the reign of mercy, and of pity; take out of your consciousness all the Christian revelation of the place of pain and sorrow in uplifting; also all certain hope of immortality, of the Communion of Saints "in Christ," and, once more, no revelation of a complete holiness of life. As I have already said, the centre of gravity drops out of our world.'

The teacher was silent, so was the pupil. Then the teacher proceeded: 'I am glad you asked that first question, because it certainly occurs to many who do not get it answered. But I think you see the answer and can help others, when next you hear someone puzzling over the "signs of Christ" and how far these would have appealed to himself if he had met the Lord as the first disciples did. Put it to him: what sort of "to-day" are you thinking of? A "to-day" inconceivable to you

because from it has been eliminated all that we owe to Christ on earth? Or a "to-day" equally inconceivable because it is supposed to be what Christ has made it, *but without Him!* Let us put aside futile and most unnecessary questionings. I will tell you what we may do: we may prosecute a study than which few are more entrancing, namely, what "the fulness of the time" meant, how truly it was just that; and then further, and still more wonderful, the method of the Lord in making Himself known to the world for all time. I will not speak of the first subject—you are fairly well acquainted with it; but the second, *that* is ever new, the Lord's Method. There are two books to which I owe much for this: "Pastor Pastorum," by Latham, and "The Training of the Twelve," by Bruce. Every step makes one marvel: with an assured act the Only Begotten inserts the leaven, sows the seed which seems so tiny, in a land so small, and just at the full time for sowing: and yet the whole earth is not large enough to contain the result. But I pause; let us meet to-morrow.'

XIX

TRAINING APOSTLES

(I)

'He continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples: and he chose twelve.'—LUKE vi. 12, 13.

TEACHER and pupil met again as arranged.

T. 'The Lord's method in teaching His chosen, that is our subject: remember I have nothing new to supply, but just what strikes me.'

P. 'Why did He choose those very twelve?'

T. 'I suppose that again is a whole subject in itself: At present let us give a sufficient answer; He prayed and then He chose: He and the Father are one: these were the needed scholars and future builders.'

P. 'Why no women, sir?'

T. 'Ah! that is a modern question: in

"the fulness of the time" it was entirely out of the question and against the customs of the age: whether any more than this can be said I know not. We stand to-day upon the parting of so many ways that it is little use to prophesy which of twenty roads your generation will take without having to retrace its steps. Now let us suppose the twelve chosen. Had they the faintest conception of what it meant? I doubt it: it was a new life, a new method, a new era, a new task unimaginable in conception, carrying with it the destiny of the whole human race. Again note the first essential. These men were to spend years with their Master, virtually without a break: it was to be day and night; every gesture and deed, every attitude and temper, His silence as well as His speech, His whole character in fact was to be incorporated into themselves. He was sinless, but He did not tell them so: He was the Only Begotten of the Father, but they were to discover this for themselves by a conviction far stronger than could be attained by authoritative teaching. They must believe because they could not help it. The same lesson, my friend, is needed to-day. Those who come as disciples to Christ and study Him in His words and in those of His Apostles, come to believe in Him because they can do nothing

else: union of head and heart, of will and love, comes to stay.'

P. 'Were not these twelve chiefly from one part of the land?'

T. 'Yes, without doubt, but it seems to me that they were specially *not* chosen from one spot; from among the companions of His childhood, boyhood, and early manhood. It is a human touch, is it not? A prophet has no honour in his own country, He said. When He came to teach those upon whom all depended He would begin with the men who first knew Him after the Spirit had descended upon Him. Before this He was not ready to instruct; intertwined indeed are the human and the divine, there is no parallel to it.'

P. 'From which did they learn the most, sir? From His acts or His words?'

T. 'A delightful question. I suppose I had better give you the old answer. All His acts were words: all His words were acts. He in Himself, in all He is, is the miracle, too deep for full knowledge. But I should like to note, first, an instrument He never used, disdain. How often, *we* should say, He might have. He never did. Wrath, yes: grave ever at seeing the invisible, but disdainful never; a lesson full of comfort for you and me: He will never disdain us. "Nothing but the infi-

nite pity is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life." Do you remember those words in "John Inglesant"? But I mentioned wrath. How splendidly it broke out in His clearing of the Temple twice. And there was a growing strength in His wrath if you examine the two occasions. At the beginning of His ministry He drove out the sellers; at the end, both the sellers and also the buyers. He could not endure the Temple Courts to be used for merchandise, for sharp practices, nor as a thoroughfare. A lesson for us again, my friend. Foster, pray, pray foster in your young days reverence. Guard it as a precious gift, one of the most precious. Do not destroy it by joking of holy things. Strengthen it by reverence for places set apart for worship and Sacraments. Treat the Bible with reverence. Make it the topmost in any pile of books.'

P. 'Now give me, sir, an outstanding lesson.'

T. 'I think He wished to show them two powers: His power over man, and also over all created things outside man. I think also these two lessons are intertwined. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? It is really one power. He "by Whom all things were created" had power over all creation of course, sentient or not; the only check came from His

own self-limitations. So far as we know, He began with teaching them His power over nature, and it was water and wine: He went on, in His day's work, with power over man's body and his ailments. And He taught them from the beginning that He had power over death. Rarely did He raise others from the grave, only thrice so far as we know: and you remember that those three so raised illustrated three ages of man in a sense: a child, a youth, a man of full age. And here, my young friend, accept a lesson for this age of yours which will stand you in good stead. It is surely one of the things to be "read, marked, and inwardly digested" by us that nothing comes from those thus raised, no word of their experiences beyond the veil, no message or hint or recorded statement for our comfort, edification or warning. No, and it is a lesson meant to be taken to heart. Let me say it once, even though I may offend some: no well-grounded Christian nurtured within the Catholic Church cares to dabble with problems beyond the veil. In all such things he is content not to know.'

P. 'Can you give any reason, sir?'

T. 'I can only give you an opinion: I believe it is beyond human intelligence, such as we at present possess, to understand, to get

any view which does not mislead, of life after death. It is to be " in Christ," " with Christ " : yes, certainly. But the curtain hides. At the Transfiguration it is lifted, but the record is as reticent as possible. Speaking quite generally and in all sympathy, I think all who begin to rest upon messages, intimations, helps, from those who have passed the veil, are just so far less well balanced than before, more unsafe as guides, more open to superstitious, magical, and harmful influences. Now, farewell till to-morrow. I shall expect some apt questions also from you.'

XX

TRAINING APOSTLES

(II)

'He continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples: and he chose twelve.—LUKE vi. 12, 13.

'WELL, sir,' said the Pupil, 'I am eager for more of your thoughts on the old subject.'

The Teacher kept silence awhile, then, 'I have a group of them for you, convictions of my own, some of them. Of course, it can only be my way of putting them which could be novel. First, I ask, did the Lord choose geniuses? Were there any such among the twelve? Genius for saintliness assuredly: one at least. Most of them were average, and also good, men. One was in greater peril than the rest. He was tested, and great was the fall. But an intellectual outstanding genius, was such chosen?

Without question, but after His Ascension. To me St. Paul's call is as clear as that of the twelve, called by the voice of the Lord Himself. And it makes St. Paul's contribution to the Faith quite certain. He was not an acute thinker only, and on the highest level, as high, for example, as St. Augustine of Hippo, and it would be impossible, I think, to go higher. No, he had seen the Lord; he stands with the twelve, not with any, however great, who have followed Him. And next, the Lord's method of teaching. It is a splendid lesson for the outdoor preacher to passing crowds. To them He spoke in parables, in stories. He did not pray with them, so far as I know. Prayer needs silence, needs prepared hearts; so does deep teaching and use of very sacred language. The Master has taught us not to "cast pearls before swine." Again, have you any opinion when He told the twelve about the forty days' temptation? No one of course knows. I waver between one of those first days in Holy Week, the Monday and the Tuesday, or else after the Resurrection. I incline to the latter. I think after the scene in Gethsemane, after the Cross, it was natural to show them how He had begun His ministry by a trial almost as terrible.'

P. 'The questions put to Him, sir, I often think they must have been vexing; still, they

were very human : I think I should have asked them.'

T. 'They were more than vexing. The subject has been splendidly treated by Dr. Hort in "The Way, the Truth, and the Life." Do you know the book? You ought : it will live, it must. Why are children's questions so puzzling to answer? Because the child starts from ignorant assumptions, and your answer must be such that you give no ground for establishing such assumptions.'

P. 'Then is no answer possible to many a question?'

T. 'That is so. And now turn with reverence to the Master. Listen to questions honestly asked by the twelve, but containing we don't know how many delicate false assumptions. None of these must be encouraged ; and so as we begin to understand the Gospel records we never cease to be amazed at the Lord's answers. Are they not as a rule most unexpected, almost bewildering, not direct? Of course, and for the reasons above given. I have often given you the simplest instance, and you shall have it once more. The disciples asked Him, "Are there few that be saved?" How many false assumptions there may be in that question we know not : no doubt a good many. And the Lord answered, "Strive to enter in at the

strait gate." Again, I give you my thoughts as they come to me from others; it is surely remarkable that the Lord (with reverence be it spoken) indulged in no oratory; His was no revival, no appeal to emotions chiefly. In a sense He came to teach twelve men, and, as I have put it, one other later on. He was engaged in putting in a foundation. Being "the express image of the Father, He healed, comforted, taught in stories and parables. Perhaps his Forerunner was a revivalist. The Master is above criticism. We sit and learn: if we question it is only to ask Him to enlighten our ignorance of what He meant.'

P. 'What did He mean, sir, about evil?'

T. 'I have my own opinion, but also I know that greater men would not agree with me. I have no doubt He taught us to believe in the personality of evil. I see nothing irrational in it. We are surrounded, I believe, with spirits good and evil. I don't believe in Milton's actual presentation of the Prince of the powers of the air, and I thank God no one can conceive of that personality: it would mean madness. I believe, too, that in this twentieth century, and after all the amazing advances in knowledge of this earth and its powers, it is easier, far easier, for us to believe in the devil than it was fifty years ago. We have gone deeper: if we have

learnt more of the heavenly life, it is balanced by having learnt more of the life of hell and of a spirit, personal and real, of evil, a will which affects our will. And in this connection do let me remind you of the breadth and grandeur of the Redemption. Very few of us make what I have called its breadth our habitual conviction. Most of us contract it till it affects only the human race. But if there is one thing plainer than another it is that through the thirteen He called and taught—twelve at first, one afterwards—it is the Redemption of all creation that was His work, and of that He spoke when He said, "It is finished." Do you ask, how does the earth show signs of evil? I don't know, I don't think anyone will know till we see "a new heaven and a new earth," and compare the two. St. John naturally thought the sea was an evil. To us it is not a divider but the best of high roads. But let us pause, my dear fellow. Even to talk of these questions affects with a sense of awe. The disciples always feared to ask the Master of Himself; no wonder: just so, it seems bordering on irreverence to try to enter into His method. I pray I have not erred in so doing.'

XXI

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

'The faith which was once for all delivered.'—JUDE 3.

'WE have our controversies at home, sir, especially about two articles of the Creed: that is, of their interpretation. Now, you have travelled much; you have seen the Gospel take root among many races; are you anxious about the result of these doubts?' The missionary smiled: 'Not in the least,' he answered; 'perhaps not sufficiently careful, you might say. There are two cordials for faint hearts: one is history, the other travel. Both these abundantly refresh the Christian evangelist. I won't discuss history, for I am no expert in it, but in passing I may say that the more I read the more I am reminded that the same doubts about the Faith have been expressed in every age, generally at a different

angle of course, according to the prominence given at the time to currents of thought or discoveries of nature. And their effect on Gospel truth? Well, they remind me of the squalls that sweep over the ocean, flinging spray and spume over the ship; but ocean depths are not troubled, nor the ship either, with its Pilot and Captain.

'But travel and its lessons, there I cannot help being something of an expert. Listen to my parable: "There was once an aged farmer, wise with the wisdom of years of toil on a wild farm of large extent. Every kind of soil was to be found on it: good and bad, hard and soft, exposed and sheltered, sunny and bleak. He came into the market town one day to buy seed corn, and saw a fine shop with seeds of all kinds advertised. Out of curiosity he went in to examine and ask prices. He found everything distinctly cheap, and the salesman was evidently a man of high education. At once there were pressed upon him some special varieties of wheat which were guaranteed to have been carefully manipulated. They had been refined and treated chemically according to the newest theories. The shopman, hearing who the farmer was, begged him to try these samples; indeed, he offered to make him a present of a good many bushels, for he was

anxious to know the practical result when placed in the hands of so experienced an agriculturist. The old farmer examined the seed, brought out a little magnifying glass and turned over the grains : finally, he smiled courteously and answered, ' No, thank you, sir ; it would be no use my taking this seed. Your treatment of it is not new, if you will allow me to say so. I remember fifty years ago buying seed like this : it was offered me by a highly-educated man, very clever and book-learned, and I was so much impressed by him that I laid out a good deal of money on the stuff. But I lost heavily over that job. I took great trouble, too, but the seed didn't come up at all, most of it. There was a patch here and there in a corner, but that, too, faded, and I learnt my lesson. You see, sir, I dare say you learned gentlemen have all sorts of apparatus at your disposal to guard against wind and hail and pests. I dare say you have grown this stuff in a hothouse in your garden, and I suppose you got some sort of result ; but look at my farm, sir ; just you come and stay with me for a week ; better still, come and pay me several visits, a week at each season of the year, and you will know better than I can tell you in words what the stuff I sow has to put up with : the pests, the floods and the drought, the heat and the frost, one after the

other. But last year, in spite of bad weather, I had a fine crop, and not only in the sheltered parts but all over the farm. You see, sir, I know by experience how deep down the roots must go if they are to stand all I have to battle against. This seed, begging your pardon, doesn't send down root enough. Yet it's nice-looking stuff enough, that I allow. But I can't afford to make any more mistakes; my living depends upon my farm.' The old farmer took up his hat and went out, while the shopman looked disappointed. The old fellow went and bought the well-known brand which had stood the tests all through the years. But he didn't talk of his visit to the new seedsman; he felt sorry for him and liked his face, and knew that he was in earnest in his business; he knew also that experience would come, even though dearly bought, as indeed is the rule with all experiences."'

The old missionary smiled tenderly. 'That is the parable, and would you like to know the name of the farmer? It is "Evangelist."' 'Thank you,' I said, 'and I suppose it sums up your experience everywhere?' 'Everywhere,' he answered. 'Do go on; tell me something more of the seed that grows everywhere.'

'Very well, and remember it is the result

of thought after travel in almost every land. I started with no theories already formed; I came to my conclusions after pondering over my actual experiences: "The seed that grows." As I think of it there rises before me, as an illustration, a beautiful building, sacred beyond compare, hoary with age, bearing the marks of fire and storms and flood. But it has that weather-beaten look which you can see in regions where granite-built houses are impregnable to the assaults of the elements. It has two gates, and there are arches with pillars on either side of them: one such doorway at the front, the other at the back.' He was silent, then continued: 'Some would smile at me when I tell you that all my life's experience tells me that those two arched and splendid entrances are the two clauses in the Creed which just now are being belittled, or interpreted away, or apologised for, however you may put it. And mind you, I say it tenderly: I have too much respect for trained men to have aught but respect: I know they are as earnest as any others.' Again he paused, then he continued: 'You know what happens when, in a typhoon, say at Hong Kong, a door is blown open. Crash goes furniture and window-glass inside the house; the wreckage is awful, and it becomes almost

impossible to save the house from destruction. The door at the opposite end is blown open and the storm fiend rides through the dwelling.' He laughed. 'I fear I have inflicted another parable on you, my friend, but if you take the two together you will understand what an old missionary feels about the two clauses to which you refer, and from sheer experience. I am not a learned man, except from travel and observation.' I gripped my old comrade by the hand, and he knew by the force I used what I thought of the old farmer's lesson.

XXII

THE ROLL OF HONOUR

'To this end have I been born.'—JOHN xviii. 37.

'THANK God for that. Look!' My companion turned; together we faced the Eton 'Roll of Honour.' Over the names were the words, 'For this was I born.' 'Yes, splendid,' he exclaimed in turn; 'I doubt whether anyone could excel that.' We recalled to ourselves the scene before Pilate: the Saviour telling for what He had been born, to bear witness to the truth. And now the young life of England's best, dying for the cause of truth, honour, and justice. It was no irreverence to take those words for this tablet. No: and more than that: I heard a preacher on Good Friday tell how different was the view of a completed life in God's sight from that inscribed upon many a memorial tablet, 'Cut

off in the flower of his age.' Standing before that Record of the School, we both were assured that these were not 'cut off'; no, they had come to the completed end, and none nobler; though parents, wives, and children found it hard to assuage their anguish. Time will help us all. My friend continued: 'I should like to tell you of a picture in the Academy which I do not forget. It was a scene at the Front; a plain, snow-covered, extended far away; and though it was night a full moon made it almost as bright as day. Planted thickly over the ground were the wooden crosses, each with its shadow upon the snow: in itself a moving sight. But look, there is one Figure; His back is towards us, a slight halo round His head: He stands and gazes over that field, sown thus with lives born "for this end." They were His comrades. He too lived but a short earthly life, yet complete in every respect. The Master had come to inspect the seed sown, and to speed the harvest from such sowing; a hundredfold it will surely be!'

We walked away and conversed. 'Our trouble in earlier life,' said I, 'naturally is that we do not then know for what in detail we have been born. Thirty, even forty years passed in my own case before I had any clear

view what my own talents were. Some even develop later still. I suppose some do not know till too late that they have mistaken their vocation; but I am not sure: it is fine to see a man becoming a noble character just because he had made a glorious use of an uncongenial profession. How was it with you, my friend?' 'In my case,' he replied, 'I was certainly fifty before I discovered what I could do, and what was even more satisfactory, what I could not do. What a sense of peace comes from having discovered at last that God does not mean us to strive to be this or that.' 'I agree,' I answered; 'the day comes when all doors but one are shut. Thank God when that happens, when life at length becomes simple and not a tangled skein. I really think it does become simple at the end, as it must have been with those dear fellows. I cannot get that motto out of my thoughts, "For this was I born"; all doubt ended, all life's questions answered. We envy them, don't we?' My comrade continued, 'Life to me has been as though a messenger had come and pointed out the direction of life's journey. There, over that plain, up those hills, through those valleys, till the horizon faded into mist: shall I become famous, rich, long-lived, fortunate, free from suffering? or the reverse?

Then I remember having a longing to find out somehow. Could anyone foretell the future? No one, of course, could. And at length, thirty years afterwards, it came to me with a shock, what a blessed gift of God it is not to know what is coming. To be told of troubles, burdens, sorrows, before the strength had come to support them, how terrible: to know in youth the burdens of middle age, or at fifty the weight to be borne at seventy, no: as our days, so shall our strength be, and there is no promise more grateful.' Then I followed: 'True; and we have just the few certain facts at the beginning. There is no doubt we have been called to start on the road; moreover, we have been blessed ere we started; and thirdly, we have a Comrade all the way, He Who came to visit that harvest field you spoke of.

'One or two more certain facts: we know the army to which we belong, and the enemy to fight. But we cannot get over our anxieties. A good soldier is always afraid of a "break through" upon his own line: the mist and fog help the enemy: then the shame of having failed. And the Master knew this was continually with us. "Fear not, little flock." "Let not your heart be troubled"; or St. Paul—"lest I be a castaway." Had it not been for these forebodings, where would our prayers have been,

or the broken heart, or the leaning upon God? How could we even kill that demon, Pride, otherwise?'

'Yes,' answered my companion; 'but, as faith grows, what romance there is in life! There is the long road, how fascinating: and over all the fears there hovers our Trust. We could wish for nothing nobler than one day a simple record of duty—whether ended at twenty or extended to eighty, and over it—"For this was I born." And if we might beg a boon, then a Cross above and the Master come to watch the seed sown: life not ended, only just begun, and the hope in front that all who have the Cross thus planted over them may hear, "These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."' So we parted.

XXIII

OVERCOMING

'To him that overcometh.'—REV. ii. 7.

HARD to 'overcome,' is it not? The Lord knew it: so seven times over He pleads with us: seven times the voice comes to us through seven Churches. Take it, if you like, as if it were a peal of bells in one key. 'To him that overcometh'—then the tenor bell strikes —'even as I also overcame.' We want that peal badly just now, and especially for us folk at home who wait and watch, who don't understand strategy and have to trust our leaders and are unable to get from them why they, too, wait and watch and delay, till the hour strikes, the victory of honour and justice. So some of us look about for any excuse to end this business. Haven't we fought long enough? Is the enemy purpose so very

bad? Hasn't he a good deal to say for himself? Wouldn't he keep his promises, or make restitution if we asked him in a very gentlemanly manner? All the time the bells are ringing, 'To him that overcometh' and 'Even as I overcame.' And as they ring let us consider.

The old seer at Patmos, he had seen all his brethren depart, most of them murdered, we believe; and in the Lord's harvest field all manner of weeds had come up, some with beautiful flowers, all of them with long roots: nothing seemed able to kill them once they had taken hold. 'No matter,' the old man wrote, 'To him that overcometh—even as I overcame.' So the bells ring all through the centuries and the Apocalypse is quite a modern book, just the book for to-day as for all great and terrible days.

But again, there is history. What would you have done in the days when the vast masses of Persians descended on Greece? Every other nation had gone down before those huge armies: the Dardanelles had been bridged, think of that: the blue streak had been conquered: no hope now: at last invasion had come. In sporting phrase it was a thousand to one on Persia, and there were parents in Greece, wives, sisters, sons, and daughters

dependent upon their elders, all with hearts as tender as yours, whatever were they to do now? and they had not that peal of bells then which we have to-day. All the more let us never forget to-day what we owe to Greece. It makes us shiver when we think what we should have lost if Greek parents, politicians, sons and daughters, wives, and husbands, had not faced the whole thing; a thousand against twenty thousand, three hundred against ten thousand. Just remember this—it was because Greeks overcame then that there blossomed from them such a revelation of thought, of poetry, of art, that the world has stood in reverence before it all ever since. It meant that the little group of people in that comparatively tiny land had come to the supreme test. Were they worth preserving? Was there a fibre in it which could be made something of for the world's sake, for God's sake? Yes—we see it plain. Not one Greek life was really lost, every one then was a seed sown. Then turn to Italy. In due time the same national test. One of the three or four greatest military geniuses of the world was at last at the gates of Rome: everything had gone down before him—all North Africa and then south-west Europe and at last Italy. We can hear Christ's bells ringing, though they couldn't

—'To him that overcometh—even as I shall overcome.' Was the Roman fibre worth preserving? Had it a gift for the world, for God's work? To us the situation is plain. In all such times it is the same question. It is not merely the present situation which is at stake, but the future. And the Roman people overcame when the outsider might have said it was five hundred to one against them. And once there was a distinction made within the limits of one nation. The Twelve Tribes were tested, but only two stood the test: the other ten did not possess fibre. They had no gift for the world; so they passed away and were lost among other races and peoples; at least they ceased to exist as a separate entity.

How comforting history is! It is not a question to-day of a few years of rest, of cheaper food, of united family life: no, far far more than that. But 'Is England worth preserving? Is the British fibre needed for the world, for God's cause, in years to come?' For us it is a tremendous question even though we have never been invaded: but it is a still more tremendous question for little nations which have been almost wholly submerged. Only the tops of the hills of Belgium, Servia, Rumania, and of other regions remained visible at one time above the flood which carries on its tide corpses

and buildings, and all that civilisation has treasured, and as we look on we thank God, for the tops of those hills. It seems clear in the light of history that there is some great gift for mankind, for God's cause, awaiting the world from Belgium, from Servia, from Rumania; and even, may we hope? from the French and British and Italian and Indian races, and others too numerous to name. Take comfort then: it is not a matter for to-day but for a century, two centuries, three centuries hence. There are gifts awaiting the world, of religious insight, of noblest Christian devotion, of art, science, of everything that makes God more visible, that raises man nearer to God—yes, but who is going to win them? Who will open the book which contains the secret and take the key and unlock the door? The bells, listen to them: 'To him that overcometh—even as I also overcame.' Thank God we have such bells: how much more wonderful were they who hadn't them and yet overcame! No, no single death at the front, no effort that leads to death at home from overstrain, no single effort to keep up the courage of those who begin to faint, is lost. If you feel faint, just ask 'Is my race worth preserving?' It will hearten you. 'To him that overcometh—even as I also overcame.'

XXIV

BUT——

'I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men . . . But . . .'—Rev. ii. 2–4.

'What do you make of the message to Ephesus?' my friend asked. 'I think it is one of the most touching of warnings. My heart goes out to the Ephesian Church. I can imagine no loving-natured person having any feeling but very warm sympathy. Then the ideal of the warning voice—it is so high: the Spirit is indeed like a sharp sword dividing joints and marrow. All the more it is an exceedingly modern warning too, none more timely for us to-day.' 'I am glad you think so,' I answered. 'They had so much, hadn't they? yet that "but" comes in: it is like a blow given to a tired, toil-weary man.' 'Yes,' he answered, 'but the good physician doesn't hide the truth: it is no real kindness to the patient.

'Let me at least give you the position as I see it. The city was the centre of most powerfully established pagan cults, and the whole population lived on the trades connected with them. Amongst all this lived that little Christian community. It was almost as if they were living at Mecca among Moslems to-day. Spiritually, I think the Ephesian Church must have struck a very deep note. You see, it would not be easy to speak much more highly of any Church than the Lord through the Apostle speaks to them. It comes out strikingly if we press the Greek words used.

'Take them in turn: "I know." There are two words for "knowing." One expresses knowledge after effort and study: the other speaks of a sort of intuitive knowledge, something seen with absolute clearness of mental vision. It is this last word which is used here; as much as to say: There is no need to investigate, it is common knowledge. Then the "works": first to be mentioned is "toil." It is not merely labour, but toil. You get at once the sense of fatigue, of a worn body and clothes, a tired, labouring man who gives a long day to his heavy task. And the deeply interesting point is that this word translated "toil" had become "almost a technical word for *Christian work*." It is used twenty times in

the New Testament. Sometimes it is coupled with another word a little stronger than it, then the two are translated "labour and travail." But, literally, it ought to be "toil and travail." I suppose the translators shrank from the sound of two "t's" so close together. Then, there is the *verb* from the word which is translated "toil." It is used twenty-four times in the New Testament. And it wholly means "to be weary." So we may paraphrase the message thus perhaps: "I know quite well, it needs no special scrutiny, that you are toil-worn in my service, constantly weary: moreover, you are patient: you suffer, but you persevere. And, again, you do not condone evil among yourselves: you are more than impatient with teachers who strike a false note, you won't listen to them, you turn away from them." Now, is not that a beautiful account of a Christian community? It seems to speak of an ordered Church life, with sacraments, general worship, and care of individuals, with a deep note all through. "Faith and Order" seem both there.

'Then comes that startling "but," and then the words, "thou didst leave thy first love." What does it mean? I can only give you my own conviction. I think it means a loss of the eager sense of expansion; of what

we mean to-day by the yearning for evangelisation. It is as though they had unconsciously pulled down the blinds of their church windows. I use a very modern metaphor, but I do it to make the fault modern. In their case it seems to me that it was the effect of persecution. A little community in a great pagan city, with their chief leader in exile at Patmos, they had been deepening their own spiritual lives, tending their own flock fully, and keeping the Faith pure, but they had been retiring from evangelisation. I bethink me of many a fragment of the Orthodox Eastern Church under Moslem rule, and tenderly.

'Nothing was more natural at Ephesus, but the Voice comes with sternness. Therein lies the value for us. St. John himself is guiltless: he could not but preach Christ, of whom he was the last personal witness, and so he went to Patmos. Another great leader, long since dead, St. Paul, could not restrain himself. Whether in a Roman prison, whether scourged or stoned, or in peril on sea or on the land, he could only proclaim the Gospel and spread the news and take the consequences. But this Church was becoming self-centred, not progressing outwards. "Thou hast left thy first love." Again, I say: I think of them more than tenderly.

'Surely there is no lesson more important

for us to-day: thank God, we are finding out the fault more and more. It is a commonplace of Church life among ourselves to hear of parishes ordered in every way internally, the means of Grace fully imparted, the services magnificent, the roll of communicants great, the spirit of giving very fine, but all for the parish and its needs, or for the diocese and its needs.

'But world evangelisation—that is another matter. The parish blinds, the diocesan blinds, are pulled down too much. The light does not go far out into the highways and hedges of the great world, except here and there a streak from a corner.

'I wonder what St. John would say to the Church life of some of our magnificently ordered parishes with their toil unto weariness, and their perseverance in good works and their strenuous care for the purity of the Faith: all of it fine, yet with a "But." What do you think?'

I agreed, and all I could say to my friend was: 'I think the message to the angel of the Church in Ephesus is as modern as anything I know.'

XXV

SUPERSTITION

(I)

'Not a few of them that practised curious arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.'—Acts xix. 19.

We had been discussing the article in the *Times* Literary Supplement of July 11, 1918, on 'Fatalism and Destiny.' My visitor was a veteran African missionary and a student of animistic practices and beliefs. Approving of the article, he quoted the sentence from it that spoke of the huge rent in civilisation caused by the War, which had opened up primitive strata of thought regarding fatalism, and urged that no attitude towards unseen destiny could be dismissed as a trifle: and further, that the fatalist looks for some unseen and unaccountable power outside himself,

relieving him of responsibility, a prey to some blind physical force he could neither fight nor understand. 'But why,' he said, 'should the article be written? The subject is always with us in pagan Africa, it is our foe to be vanquished, and the most terrible burden of the poor African—the religion of fear, of fear of evil living in almost every material thing. To cast out fear by the Gospel is our life's work. But here in England——?'

'The rent spoken of in the article,' I answered, 'seems to have brought up some more of the old paganism. I suppose it has never ceased to lurk in the corners of the hearts of the most convinced Christians. What else is the sort of fear of lucky and unlucky numbers, days, sights, and actions?' 'I suppose so,' he answered. 'I suppose also that before I knew Africa and its sorrows and dreads I looked upon this veiled paganism as a joke. But no one can joke over the relics of animistic beliefs who has lived among people for whom it is their religion. Do people really believe in these things, or is it merely a joke?' 'I don't know,' I answered, 'but I confess that as I grow old I feel inclined to be stern, to denounce rather than to smile. I think it would do good if Christian people would band together to rebuke what in these days offend

the Christian instinct. I think it would do good if we agreed to ask someone who expressed fear at some sight or sound, "Are you a pagan or a Christian?" Of course, I should be very gentle towards old village superstitions among the uneducated, which have lived right through these thousands of years, relics of days of Druids and of cults much older yet, the dread of evil spirits to be placated. But to find educated people joking about these fears, half believing them, becoming anxious, meeting danger from sickness in consequence by expecting it, I really think the time has come when we ought to recall each other to our senses. You see I wax hot. Am I too hot?' 'No,' he answered; 'I rejoice. I don't want to see any fragments of paganism tainting the spiritual life of England. What superstitions, paganisms, what not, do you meet?' 'Take the simplest,' I answered; 'spilling salt, sitting down thirteen to a meal, touching wood when someone thanks God for a mercy, the refusal to marry in some special month, the wish to carry a charm against the evil eye or against sickness—could you parallel these in Africa?' 'Why,' he said 'this is all of the essence of the primitive beliefs. It is pure animism and paganism. I suppose, if people only knew the misery of the daily fears of pagans, they wouldn't dally with

such any more than they would go to the midden heap in order to sprinkle some of it over a cleanly-cooked meal. All such superstitions are like the taints brought from cast-off refuse by flies and deposited in our dishes. People do not joke any longer about fly danger; I trust they will be ashamed of their lurking superstitions.'

'Yes,' I said, 'but let us go deeper yet; let us take these errors into the Master's presence. I pray that I may not be irreverent; I speak now in the cause of reverence and of loyalty to the Lord. Let us interpret what may be a joke, but is likely to be a real lurking belief, into what it really is. Here is one who is actually, though unconsciously, praying such a prayer as this: "Lord, I know Thy love, that it casteth out fear. I know, or rather I say that I know, that Thou art ever present, that the Holy Ghost is Thy gift from the Father, and that in every need, trouble, or perplexity I may, I ought, to draw nigh to Thee and fear nothing. But I am not satisfied. Somehow I think there are spirits of evil who had better be placated with gifts outside Thine own. There is armour, I am told, not given by Thee, which, however, may stand me in good stead, better than any Thou hast given us, or, at all events, besides Thine own. At least I

had better add this defence to all Thou hast promised. So I carry something with me: here it is; I feel safer now. And also, Lord, someone has told me that evil spirits come on certain days. Thou hast not said it, very much the reverse, still I shall feel safer if I avoid those days. Then there are birds which warn me of evil coming. Thou hast not said it, still I am not sure that Thou canst wholly guard me——" I cannot go on. It sounds such blasphemy. Fancy praying thus as we kneel at the rail of the sanctuary! Fancy meeting St. Paul and telling him how we are acting! Confessing Christ in the whole Catholic creed and then going away and taking out an insurance against the powers of evil against the Devil, on our own account, privately!

'As a joke? Well, can such an act be a joke? Can't you see St. Paul's face blaze? or St. John's? How he must have raged against pagan fears before he could get that pile of books, charms, fetishes, what not, burnt in some open space in Ephesus! Read Gal. iv. 11: "I am afraid of you." What did he say to Ephesian superstitions?' I paused, out of breath, and my missionary glowed.

'Why, that is how we talk to our catechumens, but not to our inquirers. They, poor fellows, are to be dealt with tenderly indeed.

It is impossible to be too gentle when you remember what centuries of fear and dread of the unseen they represent. But with catechumens we begin to use another tone gradually; we want to give courage. And so with the baptized—well, there again we have to be prepared for any amount of what we know as "throwing back." The best African convert, the leading light of his village, is not safe from "throwing back." The fear, the fear of the devil of his paganism, clutches him, and we sorrow and wait. Sometimes we sorrow again and again; still we wait. Perhaps, my friend,' he continued, 'you might vary your questions for your slightly pagan English friends, and ask, "Are you a catechumen? or are you a baptized Christian? How long ago was it that your last full-blooded pagan ancestor died?"' Then we looked at each other. 'I think our heat thus engendered is justified?' 'Yes,' he replied. 'I think it is for the Master's honour.'

XXVI

SUPERSTITION

(II)

'All are yours: and ye are Christ's: and Christ is God's.'—1 Cor. iii. 23.

The missionary had noted signs of the old animism among the faithful. It was only what he expected. With the pressure of African cults all around, and the call of the past upon the little remnant, what else could anyone expect? So before Eucharist that Sunday morning he addressed them:

'Brothers, the old enemy is not dead among us. The old fears are affecting some of you, and my heart is full of sympathy on your behalf. It is not likely, indeed, that any one of you will ever be free from a sudden shadow falling; your trust in God will be attacked by fear of evil spirits, by sights and sounds which used to be

your omens of evil. Even in my own country, as I have told you before, relics appear of just such beliefs as those which you have been trying to banish. And here in this land we are like the children of Israel in the wilderness. True, they had passed through the sea and had a great leader, and the Pillar of Fire guarded them, yet they feared. They remembered the gods of Egypt, and they besought one of their leaders to make them a calf of gold. Peradventure Osiris of the Egyptians, who lived in a bull, might be an added help to them besides the Lord God. But you know also how wrong they were and how they suffered, and how for our sake their story has been recorded.

'I think it will help you, as it certainly will help me, if once more I tell over for us all the story of your baptism. The Jews of old often recalled the past. Time after time they listened to the record of their deliverance, of the Passover and the Red Sea, of Moses and the Commandments, of their weakness and of God's chastisement, of their struggles for the Promised Land: and how long, how very long was the road, how many died by the way, and how at last they reached the end.

'Do you remember that great day in your own lives? Months of preparation had passed

for you : years in some cases. God forgive me if I was not always fully patient, if I failed to put myself in your place and understand your fears and the weight of your people's influence. But at length the day dawned, the day on which you were to pass through the waters, from the land of bondage into freedom. Awake you were ere the sun had risen. In an hour or two the villages around had sent their people to us to witness. By ten o'clock the bank of the stream was packed with your own people. Not hostile : no, I think they were full of awe : probably most of them, not yet instructed, thought that they were about to witness the effect of the white man's charm, a new power against the spirits of evil. Perhaps some thought it might be bought with money and added to their store of fetish. And you, you had been at prayer, silently kept peaceful. You had been permitted to be present at the Eucharist too, to gain glimpses of the heritage awaiting you after you had passed through the waters. Then the deacon collected you, clad in your old garments. There, too, in the building beside the stream were collected the white dresses : you put aside the old, you put on the new. You stood, a band of twenty, upon the bank, and I, I entered the water. Upon the

other bank were gathered the fifty you were about to join. They were singing words full of faith and hope, calling you to cast out fear and take the new name, and the soldier's oath, and trust the Saviour, Son of God, Who died, and lives again for you. You heard my voice declaring to you the command of the Lord Jesus and His tender invitation, and His warning that none must hinder you.

'I asked you of your faith. You repeated the Creed, and the sound of it almost broke me down for very joy. You joined, too, in the prayer that by God's continual mercy you might now lay aside all fear of charms and omens, and no longer dread God's creations, but give yourselves to Him Who sent His Son to bring you to the Father by the Spirit all holy, the Spirit Who dwells not for evil in stones or material things, but broods over the world and dwells in your hearts and wills. I lifted up my hands and prayed that God would bless and consecrate the water, that those now entering it might wash away their sins and receive the fulness of His grace. I called you. I called you one by one, by the old name for the last time. One by one you stepped down, entered the water, and stood before me. One of the brethren gave your new name. I pronounced it: I immersed you, for a brief space you remained immersed,

whilst silence reigned on either bank. And you, you knew what it meant. *You were dead*: dead to the old belief, the old terror. You rose again, and down the stream floated away the old will, the old man of heathen times. You rose a member of Jesus Christ, and from the further bank, as you were signed with the cross, came once more the song of the brethren: "Go forward, Christian soldiers, fear not the secret foe. Tread all the powers of darkness down, and win the well-fought day." In a few moments loving hands were stretched out to you from the other side.

'Why all this planning of the rite? In order that your own race over there should understand: nay, more than all, that you should understand how great a gulf divides you from the past: your fears, they have been transformed: your godly fear now is lest you should not be worthy of the Father's love, lest you should fail to be true to Him who is your Friend, your Master, your Saviour, your Physician, your Shepherd: you are in a Presence, indeed, always, but not of evil spirits who peep and mutter at you from trees, water, path, birds, and beasts: who may speak to you in dreams and from the mouths of fetish men. No, you live day and night in the Presence of Christ, constantly feeding upon Him in the way which

He appointed. Brothers, recall it all. It will put heart into you. It will prevent you from hearing those calls from the other bank. They invite you to go back across that stream, to return to the old life of fear, to the terrors of the past days. No, no. Yet some unseen threads seem to pull. I am not surprised. You will feel them tugging again and again, but the threads will break one by one.

'Think especially of your children born on this side of the stream. Don't hand on to them the legacy of the days of terror. Remember, it is in the day of trouble, of sickness, of some mysterious trouble, that you will wonder whether you had not better get safeguards from both sides of the stream. No, no; you died; you rose again. Face the light.

'Now come and take the Body and Blood of the Lord for your comfort and strength.' The missionary ended, and the little company of the faithful passed on to the Christian's Feast and were comforted.

XXVII

TWO JUDGMENTS

'I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne: and books were opened.'—REV. XX. 12.

ARE there two judgments? 'What do you mean?' 'Well, it is hardly possible in these days to help thinking of judgment of nations. So I ask, though you may think it fantastic, and perhaps it is, "are there awaiting beyond that Veil two judgments?" Is it not a helpful question? I think it adds a deeper sense of awe; that is all good. We talk much now of corporate responsibility and of corporate sinfulness. We tell each other that we are not only limbs but also a body. So we humble ourselves for national sins and make for national repentance. Then it seems natural to ask whether, beyond, there is *national* judgment. I imagine, after we have stood before

that throne, that Judge Who is also our Saviour, Who died for us, Who has made us His members, after we have received our *personal* judgment —well: then do we come up once more as a group of the same family and tongue, as an entity chosen for our contribution to the world as a *nation*? Of course you have no answer to give me, for we are far out of our depth. But would you not welcome such judgment? Would it not be well for us if in some shadowy way we lived now with that conviction growing in strength?' 'I suppose God calls nations as well as individuals, and if He calls and they fail, should not judgment fall?'

'Yes,' I said, 'I think the Bible is in nothing more valuable than in this very thing. The "election," the "choice," just as often refers to nations as to individuals. In the Old Testament all existing nations within the radius of the books are personified. Israel, Egypt, Phœnicia, Assyria, Babylon—all. They are judged as personalities. Perhaps they are in the Divine Mind personalities.' 'You refer too, I suppose,' he replied, 'to those later chapters in the Epistle to the Romans?' 'Yes,' I answered, 'and it would save so much misunderstanding if people would only realise that when St. Paul speaks of the potter having power over the clay, he is referring to the choice and

rejection of nations, not of individuals. That is quite clear and it seems to take away that feeling of unfairness, injustice, whatever you call it, when we realise that the subject of such choice is a nation or nations. When we come to those chapters in the Sunday Lessons I long to be able to explain that fact and say: "Pray, remember that the apostle is here referring to the calling of God to this nation or that, not to individual men and women."'

We paused. Then my comrade said: 'Perhaps I am asking you a strange question, but it has suddenly occurred to me. It is this: Is there a place of repentance for nations in this life as much in extent and completeness as in the case of individuals?' I was surprised, and answered, 'I should have thought so.' He continued: 'But look at the facts. Men and women, as revealed in the Bible, who have been convicted of the foulest sins have been restored. Of course, "If any man sin we have an advocate." There is no limit to the promise, there is always restoration and pardon, after repentance. It is the great Gospel miracle. But when a nation falls, falls utterly, can it be restored?' 'I see,' I answered. 'I had not thought of it before.'

He went on: 'Look at the long list in the Old Testament, all written for our admonition—

Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Phœnicia. When a nation falls, can it repent? Can it recover its old position? Does it not sink never to rise again? Look at history since Bible days. I don't like to mention names. Count over the Empires, the nations, of the modern world: some have fallen, their light extinguished as great forces. Why? Will they ever recover? or is it that they just died? Yet I have a dread feeling that many nations do not die: perhaps they cannot. They live on without the old vitality. Will they ever recover it? or in the sight of the world are they like him of the Greek legend who asked for endless life and omitted to pray for vitality?'

Again we were silent. Then I said: 'I suppose you are thinking also of our own days, and of the sins of some present nations, and the hopes of others.' 'Yes,' he answered, 'but again I don't like to mention names.' The outcome of our talk was that we were puzzled about the whole question of nations, both of their judgment here, and perhaps beyond the Veil. And also whether in the Divine Light a nation were a personality not only with a call, but with such a responsibility that all who make it up have a corporate responsibility so complete as to deserve and expect a corporate judgment beyond the Veil. Who can tell?

The subject added solemnity, deepened awe, as we thought of the books opened, and the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. Could the great be the nations and the small the individuals? No: we thought that fanciful. But yet ——.

XXVIII

THE FOUNDATION

'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. The fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is.—1 Cor. iii. 11, 13.

The figure of Christ—there it stands through the ages. It is the snow-peaked giant landmark for all the generations; unassailable; terrible and tender; threatening and comforting; the hope and the fear of all. It is the lighthouse just where storms rage most terribly and reefs are most perilous. Naught can shake it. Mankind passes in ships and all bless the Light. Enemies have bombarded the Light, but it is God-guarded. Hope would die amongst those who cross the waves of this troublesome world if that beacon were ever extinguished. Fear not, it cannot be.

But I have not touched yet the illustration

chosen by the Apostle for his Lord. The Foundation, that is what he sees, and the Temple erected upon it. St. Paul also seems to me to behold each successive generation building, ever building. That Temple will not be completed till the Lord come, but the centuries each in turn will add their portions. Before we handle the builders' work, gaze once more, with reverence, with awe, with trust, with joy and thankfulness on the Foundation. The best preparation would be to recall visions of Isaiah and of Ezekiel, then to turn to the Apocalypse of St. John : after that construct your own conception of the Foundation, which is the Lord glorified. The Foundation to me, as I gaze and kneel, is luminous. Now it is latent heat, a glow that tells of power, awful in its potence. Now again it flashes rays of light so tender that it speaks of life and health. Once more it shines with a purity so intense that our stained selves shrink and fall as dead before the holiness of the Lord. It is upon such a Foundation that we have been called to stand and build.

What do we build ? Answers are manifold. We build, for example, our personal and religious life on that Foundation, and experimentally, a whole subject in itself. I do not handle that here, but would rather keep to the actual subject which St. Paul has prominently

in view as he writes to the Corinthians—namely, the building of doctrine; of the doctrine of Christ Himself, Who He is; of the doctrine of the Church: what it is He calls us to fashion throughout the ages.

And now extend your sympathy in the fullest degree to the followers of Christ who humbly attempt to understand more perfectly this unique Revelation of Christ our Foundation. The human mind, unaided by light from above, could never have climbed to the height of that which God has prepared for us here and for ever as our Christian inheritance. Jesus Christ, we in Him, we on Him, resting on Him, one with Him, permeated by His Spirit.

Then the intellect, a God-given power and one to be used to the full, busies itself with this Revelation, ever trying to pierce a little deeper into the mystery, the revealed mystery.

So it is that the more restless intellects ask questions first and most often, the Greeks above all. Their own God-given gift is both the bulwark of the Faith and also the greatest peril. They came to St. Paul, at Athens and at Corinth. In the next three centuries they ceased not to question—they could not help it; and every succeeding generation has had cause to thank God for them. At times the questions rain thick, and the air is filled with the din of voices.

Do not hastily say that any one of the questioners is faithless or disloyal. It may be so, but also it may be simply the craving to understand, just to make clear what surely can in their opinion be made more plain.

Who is Christ? What is His relation to the Father, and to the Spirit? How is He human and Divine? We do not doubt it, but how? How is God one God and not three? How is He Trinity and Unity? The English mind is not restlessly intellectual, nor in a general sense is the Western mind, taking it in bulk. So the mass of such questions was asked in the East. And the Apostles in fact themselves, often perhaps unconsciously, answered most of the great questions. Living in the very sight of the Foundation they had this supreme duty. But again every succeeding generation has fastened upon their utterances also. Ever too, so the generous mind interprets it, they have scrutinised the Sacred Records of the Church line by line. Are there errors, human errors? Even if not many, what do the records mean? As knowledge grows of physical life, of the mind of man, of his spirit in its recesses, ought we to explain the Foundation in different terms? And remember there are minds in England which are more Eastern than Western in their restlessness. Credit them always, until you are

quite sure you cannot, with the fullest devotion to Christ: men, and women too, who simply desire to know the Truth.

Now turn with awe and wonder towards the Foundation. All through the centuries He abides, patient, ready to save and to teach. No sooner has man built up some theory of Him which seems to satisfy the intellect which is just then facing what seems to be the special perplexity of its day, than fire issues from that centre of Divine and eternal Light; a blessed flame it is. Lovingly it creeps up to that superstructure of doctrine, tries it; it leaves the gold but licks up the wood and the hay and the stubble. Ought the builder to mourn? Nay, not in the least if he be a true seeker. Ask him whether he desires aught but truth. 'That is it,' he answers, 'just the truth, and nothing else.'

That process still continues; of course it does. Man's intellect peering down into the Foundation, then building, building: that is what is ever proceeding. Anything to make Christ more easily or more fully understanded by His people. Then the fire, ever trying all the work so done. Be not afraid of voices questioning. The Foundation is eternal; the fire is sure to issue forth and try the work of what sort it is. Only the gold and precious stones remain.

Remember, too, that in every generation there are those who do add gold and precious stones to the Temple upon the Foundation. It is not any new substance ; it is just gold and precious stones fashioned for the use of that special generation. Does not a great peace fall upon your heart and brain as you ponder these things ? We thank God for our Christ, revealed to man by the Father, made our One Foundation. We thank Him for the fire, which is the fruit of love also, as it tests all teaching about the Foundation. We have intensest sympathy with those whose building is dissipated as insufficient, for we learn from them what cannot endure. Are they saved ? Assuredly, 'yet so as by fire.' It is not for us to be aught but humble, we who are not great thinkers. Our duty is to rest on God, to pray and to study ; above all to abide in the peace that comes from perfect trust in Him Who is our one sure and everlasting Foundation.

XXIX

PATIENCE

'Lord, have patience with me.'—MATT. xviii. 26.

THE conversation turned one evening among a party of friends upon the differences, the outstanding differences, between the temporal and the eternal, between heaven and earth, and God and man in action—an endless subject. But the first point alluded to by one of us lasted us the evening. 'Hurry,' he suggested. After a moment there was a chorus of approval. 'With reverence be it said,' he proceeded, 'can you imagine the Almighty in a hurry? Can you, at times at least, imagine weak man in anything but a hurry?'

One of us murmured, 'A thousand years in Thy sight——.' 'The whole of that song of Moses calms us,' said another. A third said, 'I see; and if one were asked to define the

Love of God perhaps one would answer : " the God of patience." ' Here was food for thought, and none of us spoke for awhile.

Then our chief student said : ' It is remarkable how the Gospels either omit, or give very sparingly, words which you might imagine would be on every page. " Hope," for example. You know, of course, that the substantive does not occur at all in them. Now take the word which we have accepted as one of the chief components of " Love." " Patience," in the sense of kindness and long-suffering towards others, that word only occurs twice in the Gospels ; as a substantive not at all, but as a verb. " Lord, have patience with me," and (Luke xviii. 7) " Shall not God avenge His own elect . . . he is long-suffering over them ? " Both those terms are common afterwards in writings which are comments on the Gospel facts. You will ask how we are to account for the problem ; how, if you like to insert another detail of the same kind, the Lord left it to St. John to say " God is Love," left it to the teaching of the Holy Ghost and did not Himself give us that revelation ? So far as I can see I put it this way. When you are bathed in the atmosphere of Love and Hope and Long-Suffering, you do not feel inclined to talk of them so much as you live on them. The day comes

when you recall the love of friends or parents or relatives; then you comment on the gifts you once received. The Gospels are the home of Patience; it is hardly necessary to name the fact—not till afterwards.'

'Tell us,' said I, 'who speaks most of patience or long-suffering?' 'I think,' answered our student, 'the Apostles speak of it equally in proportion to the bulk of the writings of each as we possess them. St. Paul twelve times, St. Peter thrice, the Epistle to the Hebrews twice, St. James thrice in one passage. Let me give you specimens, for the cumulative effect is so calming. St. Paul speaks: "Love suffereth long. Support the weak, be long-suffering toward all. In knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness. Kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering. That in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his suffering. Exhort with all long-suffering." I have loosely put together such sentences, and it touches me to note how that eager heart seems to couple kindness with patience, a good lesson for excitable mankind. Impatience is often unkindness.'

'What,' I asked, 'is the difference between endurance and long-suffering?' He answered: 'There are passages in the Gospels where patience is used to signify endurance, but that

is another matter. That refers to a weight on oneself rightly borne. The patience we are considering refers to the quality of our intercourse with others, not the burden on ourselves.'

'Yes,' said I, 'don't let us fog our subject. The going out to another of loving patience, that is our theme: it is the antithesis of hurry and impatience.'

One who had not spoken before, said, 'I cannot help referring to the Old Testament; you may well call it the "Book of Long-Suffering." God educates the world and draws aside the veil in the school life of one nation chosen for the purpose. Patiently He reveals Himself, not giving too much light at first, not more than eyes emerging from darkness can endure. Centuries pass, but the Almighty God hastes not. So slow moving is His step, suiting Himself to the strength of children, that His patience has even become a reason for unbelief in Him, that He does not care, or does not exist. Then the prophets! The heart melts at the attitude they are called to adopt, so surprising if not altogether inexplicable to our impatience. "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord." Would not that answer as the Preface to the Old Testament? From Moses to Malachi, the prophets are

patient, kind, faithful. What a preparation for the coming of the Incarnate!'

The speaker ceased, and we mused. Then I suggested that we should contrast our own conduct with this. We looked at each other. A woman's voice slowly repeated words that pierced us all, everyone. 'That servant went out and found one of his fellow servants which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying "Pay me what thou owest." So his fellow servant fell down, and besought him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee," and he would not.' Yes, each word was a thrust through our hearts. After awhile the student said, 'That passage suits our purpose just as well as its first and plainest lesson; not only the sin of unforgivingness, but also of unkind impatience in controversy, in our attitude towards our leaders, in dealing with mistakes made by each other. No patience, no reasoning, no long-suffering, naught but hurry, that is our repeated fault. And the God of Patience looketh down from Heaven unto earth.'

'Go on, go on,' I cried. The oldest among us said, 'No one present but wonders at our own impatience with children in their immaturities. We snap and scold and hurt,

don't we? We ought to know better, remembering how we, as children, were treated thus. There is hardly a child in this world that has not mutely said to parents and relatives, "Have patience with me." Is anything rarer or more beautiful than instructed patience?' 'Thank you,' I answered. Then spake up our politician. 'I can parallel that with our dealings with leaders. The world is roughly divided into two classes; those who dwell upon what has been achieved by statesmen and generals, and those who habitually dwell on what they have yet failed to do: and they choose their newspapers accordingly. I find myself asking the latter class (is it the most numerous? I am not sure, but I think so), where is your kindness and long-suffering? There are times when a general or an admiral is doing his best in a very difficult situation: should you not consider what he has done? Don't take him by the throat to cut off his head, for he is a mortal like yourself.'

'What of the Church,' said I? Rose up then our theologian. 'Christians in their controversies have been very bad offenders; yes, in every century. The very last thing we incline to say is, "Come now and let us reason together." No, we are more likely to take up stones and throw dust into the air and shout

watchwords. The wise get no hearing at first, but in due time the clamour dies and the dust settles, and it is found that the wise have been labouring to meet the ever recurring novel problems of the age; but patiently, not in haste. Then the story becomes a page of history, and as we read we wonder why so many were in such a hurry and did not trust the leaders. We wonder at them, but we fall into the same errors age after age. Over the Church's council chambers might there not be written, "Have patience with us?"' We ceased, but the lesson went home. Oh, the patience and kindness of God! Oh, the hurry and impatience and unkindness of man!

XXX

MESTROVIC'S CRUCIFIX

'Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth the inhabitants thereof.'—Is. xxiv. i.

You will remember, of course, the age-long attitude of the Jew of old towards all the mysteries of life. Whatever happened God was in it. There was nothing in the world so real as the Presence, the active, working Presence of the Almighty. Very different, apparently, seems to be the natural view of our own race, to whom it sometimes appears that (with reverence, be it said) God were an extra. The hand of God in ordinary times is the last reason we are inclined to give. Secondary causes are sufficient for us. The Jew, and this is one of his great contributions, went straight back to the first cause. With this explanation of Isaiah's words, if you read

the whole chapter, I apply them to Serbia. As 1915 ended and as 1916 commences I think many will agree with me when I say that it is Serbia and her (temporary) fate which continues to fill us with the deepest feelings of pity, pity followed by an indignation hot and concentrated and persistent, as we think of her people scattered upon the mountains. Its fate, too, has its specially acute pain, since it was consummated by a stab in the back. It is as though Holland had fallen upon Belgium after the destruction of Louvain. I think ours, in consequence, is a very righteous wrath, and all the more when we recall the centuries of patient waiting for freedom on the part of the Serb. To think of it! The Bulgar and the Turk falling upon the Serb from the rear! . . .

I wonder if you were led to visit the exhibition of sculptures of the Serbian artist Mestrovic last summer at the Victoria and Albert Museum. I would indeed that the arrival of that collection had been delayed for six months. Interest to-day would be infinitely more profound; but more than that, those who could visit the creations of that wonderful genius would exclaim with one voice: 'This race is unconquerable. If the expression of these faces is the result of years of oppression,

then victory is assured. Such patience, such strength, can have but one end.' Of course it was the oppression of the Turk which has been for five centuries the furnace of fire from which has emerged this artistic setting forth of a nation's character. In the 'Serbian Pavilion,' destined for the plain of Kossovo (and it *must* be erected there), 'you descended steps supported by crouching figures that symbolised the Serbs in captivity—gaunt, worn men with beards, their hands, palm downwards extended flat, a sign of subjection and insufferable strain' (*The Handbook*). And perhaps even more arresting were the figures of Serbian mothers with the look of dumb agony on their faces, mourning for husbands and sons. All faces had strength in them. They suffered, but also they were waiting unconquerable. With one marked and startling exception the bodies of heroes and suffering women were powerfully moulded, exhibiting vast muscular strength, almost superhuman in their strength.

But the exception! At the far end of these groups was a crucifix. I stood before it struck dumb. Never before had I seen, never before had I conceived of, such a representation. And yet——. I looked round me: yes, this Figure was the one exception. All who had

suffered for their country showed no signs of emaciation. But that Form upon the Cross! I hear that some who visited that exhibition were shocked at the Figure of the Lord upon the Cross, and went away saying it was the one conspicuous failure.

But what if it were far otherwise? This great genius who had power to move his people and all of us by his conceptions, what had he seen of the Lord's Passion?

What if he had a lesson to teach us dwellers in the West of complete self-sacrifice never yet learnt by us?

What, again, would be the true Indian view of the crucified Lord? I asked myself such questions, and more and more it came home to me that this Figure upon the Cross was the central lesson of all in that exhibition. This Serbian sculptor had tried to teach us that the Son of Man had gone beyond even what his own race had endured: not five centuries of anguish had been borne by Him, but the sins and sorrows of the world and of all creation since evil came and ruined it. So here, in the Middle East, there had arisen a prophet to teach us what sacrifice can mean. Among these heroes of his land there hung the Saviour of the world, their one hope. He knew, He understood: therefore Serbians could wait.

The Lord hung upon the Cross, an emaciated Form, reduced almost to skin and bone, almost a skeleton.

Was not that a contribution to our spiritual apprehension? A parable? A lesson? No hint in Scripture helps us. And yet——. Perhaps a new light bursts upon the record, told in such brief words, between Herod and the Lord. Perhaps I was now helped to understand the amazement which prompted the Roman Governor to say: Art THOU the King of the Jews? Again, I remembered other words, 'He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him.' Again and again I returned to that Form. I seem to have learnt the lesson Mestrovic has meant us to learn. The long road of life has borne hardly upon the frames as well as upon the spirits of many of the noblest sons and daughters of men, bowing the back and blanching the hair, lining the face and giving it patient eyes. Bodies have been worn so fine that the glory seemed to be breaking through, as through the chinks and crannies of a building well-nigh come to its end. I do not mean that Mestrovic's conception was more than a parable. But it was a noble parable.

We stand at the beginning of 1916, still at war with a terrible foe. Before it, and

the slaves it has dragged with it, Belgium, parts of France, Poland, Serbia, have been devastated. English homes stand untouched. What extent of sacrifice are we capable of in the cause of honour and justice? For the sake of weak nations? Above all, and as I write for Serbia, with its people almost lost in winter snows, with the plain of Kassovo once more in the hands of an enemy worse than the Turk because it knows better, Mestrovic's 'Christ upon the Cross' whispers to us that sacrifice for God and for His cause may mean something like what, in parable, that Figure mutely teaches. May we all learn that lesson somehow in this New Year.

XXXI

FLOODS AND TEMPESTS

(*An address to the staff of S.P.G. House on March* 26, 1918.)

'The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.'—MATT. vii. 25.

OF course, we shall never forget Passion Week, Holy Week, and Eastertide of this year, 1918. The greatest spiritual facts and memories are intertwined with the fate of the world, with the fate of all we have learnt of Christ, of liberty, of all things noble, pure, holy, of good report: and that very fact cheers us. The gates of hell shall not prevail over the traditions and conquests of Christendom. Good Friday makes us understand death as a portal into life. Easter teaches us that God lives and His will shall be done upon earth as it is done

in heaven. Full of awe, let us at the same time thank God we are permitted to live in days when the issues are so great even though the burdens are so weighty. Let us now recall to ourselves some of the moments when the same issues were in the balance, and when God's cause won, though mankind held its breath as we do to-day. Twelve centuries ago, in that same land of France, though southward, Charles Martel, at Tours, risked all in one battle against the menace of Islam —a terrible debased form of Judaism—a system of ruthless world-power—and Christendom was saved. To-day, in the same land, but northward, we are faced with a still more terrible foe, because it is a debased form, a travesty indeed, of Christianity. The salt has so lost its savour that it has become a plague germ, not even fit for the dunghill: it must be destroyed, and is being destroyed. A century ago England staked all in one battle in the same regions. Then she had this present terrible foe as an ally against an enemy as menacing as any the world has known. England is the same to-day in her aims, but her ally and her foe in those days have now changed sides. England won then, and she will win again. Some 330 years ago England staked all in one great sea battle with Spain. The cause for which

she fought was the same as that of this day. She won against Spain, and she will win again. There is, indeed, great cordial in history; let us be of good cheer. It is a great—a very great—honour that England stands in the forefront again to-day. We at home to-day have our heavy burden because we cannot be at the Front—some from age, others from sex—but we have two very solemn duties laid upon us as the winds blow and the rains descend upon our house. First, of course, our work—it is war work, and we must see that it is done as well as possible. But, secondly, and equally important, we have to see to it that no one dares to be a croaker, or to damp the courage of any man, woman or child in this realm. It is character that wins. Shame on anyone who lets anyone, whether a soldier from the Front or a dweller at home, lose faith in the cause, or doubt whether our house is built upon the rock. We are called in our several stations to do the work of Moses, and of Aaron and of Hur. We have our leaders both in Church and State. We must uphold them and cheer them. No grumblings must be heard by them, no faint hearts must lower the temperature of the nation's courage. And those two who in parabolic action supported Israel's leader, do you suppose they were

cowards? Of course they watched the fight eagerly. Do you suppose they only noted the fallings back here and there, and called attention to them? Impossible: they trusted Joshua and saw the battle as a whole. Above all, they remembered the cause, that it was the cause of God. But when we speak of courage, of a calm and equal mind in face of great onsets and threatening dangers, we have fallen back on graces and virtues which are not distinctively Christian. They form part of what are called the elementary virtues, cultivated by all strong races; they are gifts of God to His children outside the Christian covenant, as well as inside it. And it is a joy to know it. We find ourselves standing beside the Spartans at Thermopylae, and the Athenians at Marathon, who saved all Western civilisation from Eastern world-power. We are with the Romans against Hannibal, the Phœnician, even at the gates of Rome—and in the cause of law and order and justice. We are fighting to-day with all patriots of every age—and he who in such good company is making signals of despair is a traitor, and weakens the hosts who fight for honour and justice and plighted faith and all freedom. We are but a small band here, but we can do our part. We can do no more, but we shall do no less. The

rain is descending, the floods have come, the winds are blowing and beat upon the house. But not one of us is dismayed, not one is a traitor. Let us all be known at home, and in our Society, as those who bring courage and calm and confidence wherever we appear. For we are founded upon a rock. Thanks be to God we are founded upon a rock.

XXXII

PSALMS IN LIFE

'O what great troubles and adversities hast thou shewed me! and yet didst thou turn and refresh me.'—PSALM lxxi. ~~18.~~

'How many ways there are of using the Psalms!' 'Yes,' I said, 'let me tell you of my latest. Take to yourself for special remembrance the psalm that corresponds by number with your age. Yet not exactly that one alone, for you may be landed awkwardly. Take two psalms. For example, I am seventy-one: so I appropriate through these months Psalm lxxi, and also Psalm lxxii, since I also pass through that year of life on earth.' 'Delightful,' he replied; 'what is your experience of the fitness at critical epochs?' 'Most happy; and you know it is not an unusual experience. You can always bend dates, days, events, sights, and so forth, to suit some theory you have created.

I only claim now a fanciful pleasure in bending psalms to suit my thoughts. Listen to my successes. At birth: well, a parent cannot do better than take Psalm i. As a detail, it was actually the first psalm I was made to learn. Then for the possible date of a clear consciousness of prayer. At the age of five, "Ponder my words, O Lord, consider my meditation . . . early in the morning," etc. "Then, when were you confirmed?" Possibly at fifteen. Then for a year you will have "Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life." More touching still, as you open the year of coming of age, and all the more if it means the responsibility of wealth, estates, special cares; if you feel that strain, then, at twenty and in the months that follow, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee, send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion." What could be happier? Then possibly for an early marriage, and equally welcome at the age of ordination at twenty-three, "The Lord is my shepherd . . . Surely goodness and mercy . . ." You are becoming interested? Very well, I proceed, and I claim success all along the line. Let me pass to the fortieth year. Some say it opens middle age.

'You find out, thankfully I hope, how you have treated yourself morally and spiritually, and the test may be physical strength to bear the burdens of parenthood, the bigger business cares, and your share in public life. So on the birthday morn, perhaps at an early Eucharist, you say, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my calling." The words overwhelm one. "He hath put a new song in my mouth." But I need not quote further.

'Equally touching is the approach to the half-century. And here it is the second psalm you may take. You look back upon the major part of life, your experience learnt by mistakes, sins, follies, all repented of: you are in a humble frame, you know at least what you can *not* do. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord . . . a broken and a contrite heart . . ." I pass now to the age when men say you must be careful of your physical strength. "It is the critical climacteric, the multiple of seven." A very honoured Bishop once said to me when he was sixty-one; "take care of yourself when you are sixty-three. If you pass it you will live to seventy." He died at sixty-three. I have a glorious psalm for you once again, whether you desire to live or die: "O God, thou art my God . . . my soul thirsteth for thee." So I come, sustained

by such messages as these in the years that are past, to my own age, Ps. lxxi. "Through thee have I been holden up ever since I was born. . . . Cast me not away in the time of age . . . when my strength faileth me. . . . Thou hast taught me from my youth up. . . . O what great troubles and adversities hast thou shewed me, yet didst thou turn. . . . Thou hast brought me to great honour and comforted me on every side." Do you want me to go any further?' 'Do,' he answered. So I went on. 'Some reach their ninety years. No need to remind them of the song of Moses. Some few come to ninety-five. Then, so near to the Veil, they sing with the fervour of the aged "O come let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our maker." And if you want a lesson how thankfulness grows among the Lord's disciples, take one more step into my fancies. Live to a hundred and rejoice over your psalm once again, and read a personal meaning into the name of "the old Hundredth."' So even fancies, when confessed to be no more, help our spirits as we pass along the way.

XXXIII

THE GREAT ASSIZE

'I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.'—REV. xx. 12.

YOUTH looks forward. Then comes age. Age does not cease to look forward; nay, with deepened thought it passes on. Of course the old traveller looks further away, beyond the River which he is soon to cross, and without fear: at times with a special sense of peace. Thus he looks, because he hopes to meet his Master face to face, and because the pilgrim in his heart fancies he sees the group of his own kin, of his generation, gathered there awaiting him. There, too, are those who have been his lights, his masters, to whom he owes all that is best in him. Some he knew, others he had blessed for their words handed on to him.

Beyond the River and the Veil he gazes also in his dreams up to the Great Assize. I don't

think he fears it : I am not sure that he doesn't welcome it. You see, he wants to make the great confession, to have all revealed, to keep nothing back. Great awe, a deep reverence fills his heart, but beneath it, too, a strain of content. For, first, the Judge : He is no stranger to the worn pilgrim. Blessed and wonderful fact yet ever a growing comfort, he knows, that is, if he dares to look up into His face, he knows that the Judge is also his Saviour, his Master, and lifelong Friend. There is only One Who has laid down His life for him for his salvation, Who never lost patience, Who never despaired, Who always loved and always helped : and He, He is the Judge, there upon the Throne. It is He Who knows him best, and in all the wide universe there is no one he would have as Judge but He. So great, too, is his trust in that Judge that nothing, nothing whatever that He shall award can be aught but best, the very best, for him ; the sentence so given will be welcomed with both hands and the whole heart.

Some there are, indeed, who have led this pilgrim to understand that deep down in their hearts the thing they dread most at the Great Assize is this very fact that all they have been, and all they have done, will then stand revealed before the assembled hosts of all mankind, all

things lying open and naked before Him with Whom we have to do. The pilgrim has not been ignorant of that fear, and yet now as he has gained long experience, and read much, and has had long converse with his fellows, he doubts if it is really that fear which will be felt when Judgment comes.

He has come to believe, but he may be wrong, that the great surprise awaiting the children of men in that Day, and in that awful yet beloved Presence, will be a deep and overwhelming sense of fellowship with all mankind. Simple and learned, rich and poor, white and coloured, dwellers at the tropics and at the poles will, when the veils fall from life, know that they are brethren. One family, the human family, holds them all. In our thoughts, in our temptations, nay, in our falls, we shall be seen to be one; in spiritual experience of sin so alike, so very like, one to another. And our falls? The pilgrim has come to believe that there will be a strange level of anguish in the hearts of all mankind on that Day. Not that all have equally fallen into pits, or have been picked up broken at the foot of precipices, or have run from the battle in terror, or have been equally selfish or grasping or unloving; no, but then those that have fought best, or endured most, or borne most, or have shone best

as candles of the Lord, will have far the most delicate consciences. Dwelling nearer in this life to the Light of the World the stains unnoticed by others will stand out blackest in the eyes of those who have travelled the Way most nobly. They who know the Friend best will mourn with greatest grief the lightest pang they inflicted upon Him. The wounds of the Lord will be more visible to some than to others, and it is well that it should be so; it makes for fellowship. One thing will be wholly absent before the Throne—the one devil, may it so be called? *Pride*, that fell spirit which has entered in this life into the Holy Place and reigned there, which has spoiled the best more than aught else—Pride will have disappeared for ever. So the pilgrim dreams; he knows nothing, but as he walks and stumbles he cannot help his dreams, and they are not all bitter. 'Just think of it,' he muses, 'the Pharisee in myself will have ceased to exist.' Who can help, then, longing for the Great Assize? For naught else seems capable of killing that demon. And so it will come about, he is only dreaming, that never so much as then will mankind have been so united in a common, in a most pathetic fellowship; for the secrets of all hearts will stand revealed, and no one will look upon himself as better or

worthier than any other. No good thing that the best has done will be worthy of praise, for it was the Spirit's doing. 'See how sheltered a life he had. See how exposed to every blast of temptation has his neighbour been.' And then the pilgrim dreams again. Does the Way end at death? he asks. Perhaps it is only beginning. Can we expect a sudden leap forward, he asks again, when the veil is withdrawn? It seems unlikely. More likely it would appear, though he knows nothing, that we begin there where we leave off here. The comfort is that the Judge knows and we are well content. Nothing, not hell nor all the devils in the universe, can shake our confidence, our trust, in the Judge. But can the pilgrim sing the *Dies iræ*? Surely, and with chastened gladness. Whatever comes from the Judge Who died for us, Who lives for us, Who has never ceased to intercede for us—that is best. Wrath is good, very good, for it is from Him Whom we have learnt to know. Advent, then, with its stern as well as tender note, is a noble time; just the very best note with which to begin the Church's year. Fancy, just fancy, the Pharisee within us killed quite out! That is best, come what will afterwards.

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